1609/1452.

NATIONAL PROSPERITY,

THE CONSEQUENCE OF NATIONAL VIRTUE;

AND

NATIONAL RUIN,

THE EFFECT OF NATIONAL WICKEDNESS:

A

SERMON,

ON EZRA IX. 13.

DELIVERED AT FOVERAN, JULY IX. MDCCLXXXIV.

TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED, AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

PROPRIETORS OF LAND IN SCOTLAND:

RECOMMENDING

TO THEIR SERIOUS ATTENTION AND PRACTICE,

RELIGION AND PUBLIC SPIRIT,

TEMPERANCE AND PRIVATE ECONOMY;

BENIFICENCE TO THE POOR,

AND

INDULGENCE TO THEIR TENANTS.

BY WILLIAM DUFF, M. A.

ABERDEEN:

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OCT

TO THE

PROPRIETORS OF LAND

IN

SCOTLAND,

THE FOLLOWING SERMON,

AND ADDRESS,

ARE VERY RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THEIR MOST OBEDIENT,

AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

W. DUFF.

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OCT

ADVERTISEMENT.

WHEN the following ſermon was delivered from the pulpit, the author had no thoughts of offering it to the world. As the ſubjects handled in it, however, muſt be acknowledged to be of general and national importance, he was induced to reviſe the train of obſervation and argument purſued in the diſcuſſion of them. In conſequence of this reviſal, many additions and alterations have been made, and the diſcourſe now appears in a form very different from that in which it was at firſt exhibited.

While the author was engaged in the reviſal and correction of the ſermon, a variety of materials occurred to his mind, which he did not chooſe entirely to diſmiſs; but which he at the ſame time perceived could with no propriety be admitted into a diſcourſe, profeſſedly delivered from the pulpit. This conſideration ſuggeſted the idea of an addreſs to the proprietors of land in Scotland, upon ſome topics connected with thoſe treated in the ſermon, and which the author wiſhed to diſcuſs in a more free and familiar ſtyle than ſuited the dignity of the pulpit; and he now hazards the publication of the whole.

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Conſcious of the purity and rectitude of his intentions, and animated with an ardent zeal for the proſperity of his conntry, he ſubmits with diffidence his ſentiments upon ſubjects peculiarly intereſting to the community of which he is a member, to the judgment of an impartial public, and of the more diſcerning and reſpectable part of that claſs, to whoſe patronage and protection the following ſheets are humbly committed. It will be obſerved, that though in the interval betwixt the delivery and the publication of the ſermon, ſome favourable alterations happened in the ſtate of the country, which furniſh the juſteſt grounds for our gratitude to God, the remarks and recommendations contained in the addreſs, if juſt and important at the time to which they refer, will upon reflection be found to be ſo in more favourable times and circumſtances. Thus for inſtance, beneficence to the poor, whom we have always with us, recommended in the addreſs, will be acknowledged to be a duty at all times incumbent upon the wealthier part of mankind; and indulgence from land-owners to their tenants, recommended likewiſe in the ſame addreſs, will in every caſe be found conducive to the intereſt of both.

EZRA IX. 13. 14.

AND AFTER ALL THAT IS COME UPON US FOR OUR EVIL DEEDS, AND FOR OUR GREAT TRESPASS, SEEING THAT THOU, OUR GOD, HAST PUNISHED US LESS THAN OUR INIQUITIES DESERVE, AND HAST GIVEN US SUCH DELIVERANCE AS THIS; SHOULD WE AGAIN BREAK THY COMMANDMENTS, AND JOIN IN AFFINITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF THESE ABOMINATIONS? WOULDST NOT THOU BE ANGRY AT US TILL THOU HADST CONSUMED US, SO THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO REMNANT NOR ESCAPING?

AS we are this day called upon by public authority, to offer up our ſolemn thankſgiving to God for his goodneſs, in putting a period to the horrors of the late bloody and expenſive war, the words which I have choſen as the ſubject of the following diſcourſe, may perhaps appear, at firſt view, to ſome of my hearers, as more ſuitable to a day of faſt, than of thankſgiving; as they have a peculiar reference to certain judgments inflicted on the Jews, upon account of

national wickedneſs, and to the apprehenſion of ſtill greater in caſe their continuance in iniquity ſhould provoke the infliction of thoſe judgments

There ſurely can be no impropriety, however, even on a day of public thankſgiving, in making choice of a text, which naturally leads us to the conſideration of judgments recently inflicted, as well as of mercies recently conferred, upon ourſelves. The Supreme Being mingles proſperity and adverſity in the cup which he holds forth to nations in general, as well as to individuals in particular, when he ſees it neceſſary; and as the draught is intended for their benefit, it behoves them to co-operate with him in the production of the intended effect. Of both theſe ingredients he hath mixed a very conſiderable and nearly equal proportion in our cup; and while we adore his goodneſs in beſtowing the one, we ought to acknowledge his juſtice in adminiſtering the other, and his wiſdom in blending them together, thus rendering them ſubſervient to our religious and moral improvement. Attentive, therefore, to theſe various diſpenſations, and to the deſign for which they were ſent, we ſhould join trembling with our mirth, and confeſs that we have equal reaſon for humiliation and thankfulneſs.

neſs. Thus much, by way of apology, for my choice of a text, which may be thought ſomewhat uncommon for the occaſion. I now return to trace its connection with the context.

The poſterity of Iſrael, after having experienced an alternate ſucceſſion of mercies and of judgments, in proportion to their obedience to, or their tranſgreſſions of the divine laws, were at laſt, upon account of their aggravated iniquities, reduced to a ſtate of cruel bondage by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. By this prince, and by his ſucceſſors, they were detained in captivity during the ſpace of ſeventy years. Having been releaſed from this miſerable bondage by the humanity and pity of Cyrus the great, the deſtroyer of the ſecond Aſſyrian Monarchy, whom God had raiſed up as his inſtrument, for the puniſhment of the profligacy of the Babylonians, as well as for the reſtoration of the Jews, this unhappy people were, in conſequence of the treacherous arts of their enemies, again involved in a variety of troubles. They were at laſt, however, happily releaſed from them, by the activity and zeal of Ezra, the author of this book, and by that of ſome other Jewiſh prieſts, who, by their credit with Darius, obtained an edict, ordaining the re-eſtabliſhment of the Jews in

their own country, the reſtoration of their former privileges, and the rebuilding the temple at Jeruſalem.

Ezra, having been informed, as we are told in the beginning of this chapter, that many of the Jews, had, in expreſs contradiction to a divine prohibition, not only contracted alliances by intermarriage with their late heathen neighbours, but had, as a natural conſequence of ſuch alliances, been infected with their idolatry and vices, and that the head of the rulers had been chief in this treſpaſs, proſtrated himſelf upon the ground, tearing his garments and his mantle; and confeſſing his own ſins and the ſins of the people, in the language of deep and genuine contrition, he exclaims in the 6th verſe; *O my God! I am aſhamed and bluſh to lift up my face to thee, my God! For our iniquities are increaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſs is grown up unto the heavens.* The venerable prieſt, after recapitulating ſeveral of the mercies conferred, and the judgments inflicted upon the Jews, upon account of their idolatry, and other iniquities, very properly adds in the words of the text, addreſſing himſelf to his Maker, *And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs, ſeeing that thou, our God, haſt puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and haſt given us ſuch deliverance,*

liverance as this, ſhould we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of theſe abominations? wouldſt not thou be angry with us, till thou hadſt conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping? In the farther proſecution of my ſubject, I ſhall endeavour,

I. In the firſt place, to ſhew, that the Deity exerciſes a moral government over nations in general, as well as over individuals in particular, rendering national proſperity and greatneſs, the conſequence of national virtue, and national declenſion and ruin the conſequence of national vice; and that when wickedneſs, has in any nation become enormous, it has been uſually followed by national judgments. *And after all that is come upon us, for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs.*

II. Secondly, That the Almighty, in coincidence with the general end of his government, which is the reformation of mankind, ſometimes inflicts particular judgments for the correction of the nation on which they are ſent, and for a warning to its neighbours; at other times he ſuſpends, mitigates, or removes national judgments, as occaſions and circumſtances may require; and in certain emergencies, that he beſtows on certain nations, doubtleſs for wiſe reaſons, unexpect-

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ed national mercies, and works out for them unexpected and undeserved national deliverances. *Seeing that thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this.*

III. Thirdly, That if neither the more favourable and gentle, nor the more severe dispensations of providence, produce their intended effect on guilty nations, they have just ground, from reason, and the natural course of things, from the declarations of Scripture, and from the catastrophes of other nations, to dread utter destruction. *Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us, till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?*

I shall conclude with an improvement of the whole.

I. I proposed to show, that the Deity exercises a moral government over nations in general, as well as over individuals in particular, rendering national prosperity and greatness the consequence of national virtue, and national declension and ruin the consequence of national vice; and, that when wickedness hath in any nation become enormous, it hath been usually followed by national judgments.

Of the moral government of the Deity, exercised

erciſed over mankind in this preſent world, the univerſal and authoritative power of conſcience, approving of our conduct, when we do well, and condemning it, when we do amiſs, is an illuſtrious and irrefragable proof. There never was a nation, however barbarous, among whom conſcience did not enjoin the worſhip of a deity, or deities, under one form or another, and an obedience to his or their laws, as a duty, though mankind have differed widely in their opinions of the worſhip and obedience required of them; and though the laws of humanity and juſtice have been often differently explained, no one ever denied their obligation. Neither the reality, power, nor extent of conſcience, can be accounted for on any plan of human policy; nor can its dictates derive their obligation from any laws of human invention. The authority of conſcience, is often moſt powerful in thoſe caſes, which no human laws can reach; and its influence in producing remorſe and terror, ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of guilt, and an apprehenſion of puniſhment, is too ſtrongly and too univerſally felt, to be accounted for on any other ſyſtem, than that which places conſcience on her throne, as the univerſal arbiter of right and wrong; all of whoſe deciſions, erroneous and contradictory as they often are, (a circumſtance

cumſtance which clearly ſhews the neceſſity of a divine revelation, in order to give preciſion and force to her dictates) concur in pointing to one great and good end, the endeavouring to obtain the approbation of the Deity, and to promote the happineſs of mankind. This univerſal ſenſe of right and wrong, therefore, is a demonſtration of the moral government of God, exerciſed over reaſonable beings; and the univerſality and force of this principle afford a certain indication, that the verdict of conſcience, which may be conſidered as the voice of God in the human breaſt, will, at laſt, be confirmed by the righteous Governor and Judge of the univerſe.

That juſt tribute of praiſe and reſpect, which is paid by mankind, in general, to virtuous actions and characters, and that involuntary approbation of theſe, which is extorted from the moſt worthleſs of men, is another evident proof, that we are under the moral government of the Deity, who has thus taught us to diſtinguiſh the morality and immorality of the ſeveral actions we approve or condemn.

We may add, that the natural conſequences of virtue and vice in a preſent life, conſtitute another proof of the moral government of God, and of his approbation of the one,

one, and diſapprobation of the other. Thus the practice of temperance, for inſtance, imparts tranquillity and chearfulneſs to the mind, and promotes, at the ſame time, the vigour and health of the body. The oppoſite vice of intemperance, on the contrary, clouds and ſtupifies the former, and gradually, ſometimes very rapidly, entails debility, diſeaſe, and untimely death on the latter. Though theſe conſequences are conſidered by us as the natural effects of virtue and vice, they are in fact, as much the poſitive appointment of God, as thoſe rewards are, which ſhall be beſtowed on the one, and thoſe puniſhments which ſhall be inflicted on the other, in a future eſtate.

The ſame reaſoning which is here uſed, in order to prove the moral government of the Deity over individuals, from the natural conſequences of virtue and vice, may be applied to nations in general, in order to demonſtrate that his moral government extends to theſe, and to their various revolutions, as well as to individuals. The only difference is, that the moral government exerciſed by the Deity over individuals, is more extenſive and more perfect, than that exerciſed over nations, conſidered as a collective body. In the former caſe, that government is carried forward into futurity, where, by a final and

exact retribution, it is conſummated and perfected. In the latter, it extends only to the preſent ſcene of exiſtence; and in proportion to the ſeveral degrees of virtue or of vice, prevalent among the general maſs of the people, the ſtability and duration, or the declenſion and downfall of the ſtate, in which ſuch degrees of virtue or vice are found to prevail, may with the higheſt degree of probability be aſcertained. If we conſult the records of hiſtory, and compare with theſe, what our own obſervation and experience will readily ſuggeſt to us, we ſhall clearly perceive, that thoſe nations, among whom probity and honour, juſtice and temperance, rational ſentiments of religion, and an ardent zeal for the public good, have been generally prevalent, have been always found to be proſperous and flouriſhing. On the contrary, thoſe, whoſe national character hath been marked by inſincerity and diſſimulation, injuſtice and intemperance, irreligion and ſelfiſhneſs, diſſipation and luxury, have, without a ſingle exception, been found in the laſt ſtage of their declenſion, and verging with rapidity to deſtruction. Theſe mortal ſymptoms preceded and portended the diſſolution and downfall of theſe four great ſucceſſive empires, the Aſſyrian, the Perſian, the Grecian, and the Roman. The ſame ſubtile

poiſon

poiſon hath fermented in the vitals of moſt of thoſe kingdoms and ſtates, which may be ſaid to have ariſen from the aſhes of this laſt, (as might be ſhewn, were it neceſſary, from their hiſtory) and hath brought on the political death of thoſe ſeveral ſtates.— I might add, what more nearly concerns ourſelves, that this malignant venom, like the peſtilence, flying through the infected air, has been communicated to the maſs of the Britiſh conſtitution; and that it is, at this moment, ſpreading its deadly contagion with ſilent progreſs, but with ſure effect, through the ſeveral departments of government, and through the ſeveral ranks of life. I might add, that it hath already produced the diſmemberment of the Britiſh empire, and that, if its virulence be not corrected by thoſe moral medicines, whoſe operation alone is effectual for extirpating the diſeaſe, public ſpirit and private virtue, it muſt at laſt, in the natural courſe of things, and by the ſettled order of Providence, in the government of the world, occaſion the total deſtruction of the ſtate.

But the Deity's approbation of virtue, and his diſapprobation of vice, manifeſted in the whole courſe of his moral government exerciſed over nations in general, by the national rewards conferred on national virtue,

and by the national puniſhments inflicted on national vice, were never more clearly diſcernible, than in the government he exerciſed over the Jews in particular, upon which, as the example is ſo ſtriking, I ſhall beg leave to make a few remarks.

Some perſons, miſled, I apprehend, by certain peculiar circumſtances in the Jewiſh Theocracy, ſeem to imagine, that the Deity exerciſed, in ſome reſpects, a different kind of moral government over the Jews, from what he exerciſes over other nations, by holding forth to their view, greater rewards and more terrible puniſhments, in order to excite them to virtue, and deter them from vice, than what, in the ordinary courſe of Providence, are held forth to other nations for the ſame purpoſes. As this notion would throw an imputation of partiality upon the adminiſtration of the great Governor of the univerſe, inconſiſtent with his equity and wiſdom, and would imply, that he were the God of the Jews, and not the God of the Gentiles, we may be aſſured, that it cannot be juſt. I grant, indeed, that the Jews were peculiarly favoured and diſtinguiſhed from other nations, by the poſſeſſion of ſuperior external privileges and bleſſings, for reaſons, which, were it proper to enter upon ſuch an enquiry, might, with ſome degree of pro-

probability, be aſſigned. I will, however, take upon me to aſſert, that conducted as they were by a divine hand, ſubjects too, I acknowledge, in a peculiar ſenſe, of a divine government, and bleſſed with ſignal and viſible interpoſitions of Providence in their favour, the rewards promiſed to the virtuous, and the puniſhments denounced againſt the vicious, whether regarding individuals, or the whole Jewiſh nation collectively, were materially the ſame with thoſe diſpenſed to other nations, which, though leſs favoured by outward privileges, are equally the ſubjects of God's univerſal moral government. I will not carry this notion ſo far as to ſay, that thoſe temporal rewards of health, riches, long life and worldly proſperity, which are propoſed to individuals, under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, in order to animate them to virtue, or the contrary puniſhments held forth in order to deter them from vice, are propoſed or implied in the Chriſtian, which is quite a different ſyſtem: but I will venture to ſay, that the national rewards and puniſhments exhibited under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, really take place in all ages, and among all nations, being the great ſanctions of God's moral government, exerciſed over all the nations of the earth. Thus national proſperity and grandeur become, in the natural courſe of things,

and

and by the juſt appointment of Providence, the conſequences of national virtue; and national decay and ruin, by the ſame appointment, the no leſs certain effects of national corruption and profligacy. Theſe conſequences of national virtue and national wickedneſs, were indeed very conſpicuouſly manifeſted in the caſe of the Jews. While they continued virtuous and obedient to the divine laws, they were proſperous, victorious and happy. When they became wicked and diſobedient, they were naturally enfeebled by their vices, loſt their national importance, and were ſubjected to the power of their enemies. The moral government of the deity, exerciſed over nations, by the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments, was, perhaps, exhibited in a more ſtriking light, in the hiſtory of the Jews, than in that of any other nation upon the face of the earth; but it is ſufficiently manifeſted in the hiſtory of all other nations, as well as theirs;—clearly demonſtrating, that national proſperity and greatneſs are the conſequences of national virtue, and national debility and decay, of national wickedneſs.

I propoſed likewiſe to ſhew, that when wickedneſs hath, in any nation, become enormous, it hath been uſually followed by national judgments.

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This point, if proved at all, muſt be proved by particular facts and examples, and by declarations of divine authority, that thoſe judgments which are brought as proofs of an over-ruling Providence, ſignally manifeſted in the puniſhment of national wickedneſs, were actually inflicted, in particular inſtances, as the puniſhment of ſuch wickedneſs. Without ſuch declarations, it would, in many caſes, be preſumptuous in us, to attempt to aſcertain the cauſes of national calamities in particular inſtances, as we are not qualified to make a proper eſtimate of the meaſures of national iniquities, or of the chaſtiſements they deſerve, and which are ſuppoſed to be inflicted on account of them. Beſides, thoſe who are not diſpoſed to admit the truth of the doctrine of a diſtributive juſtice in the preſent world, would, without ſuch declarations, be ready to attribute national judgments to the influence of natural cauſes. The influence and agency of theſe cauſes, I am by no means diſpoſed to deny. But I maintain, that theſe are only ſecondary cauſes, or inſtruments, in the hands of the great Governor of the univerſe, which he renders ſubſervient to the accompliſhment of his wiſe and ſovereign purpoſes; and who ſends forth war and famine, peſtilence and earthquakes, thoſe dreadful miniſters

miniſters of divine wrath, for the puniſhment of guilty nations, each of them, like wind and ſtorm, fulfilling his word.

We have a very ſtriking example of the puniſhment of the Aſſyrian monarch and his army, on account of their impiety and wickedneſs, predicted in the 37th chapter of Iſaiah, the accompliſhment of which prediction is recorded in the ſame chapter, and in the 19th chapter of the ſecond book of Kings.

Hezekiah king of Judah, alarmed and terrified at the approach of Sennacherib king of Aſſyria to Jeruſalem, with a numerous army, proſtrates himſelf before the Almighty, imploring his protection; and at the ſame time, ſends a meſſenger to the prophet Iſaiah, requeſting the aid of his prayers, in behalf of himſelf and his people. The anſwer of the prophet is diſtinguiſhed by that dignity and energy of expreſſion, which were ſuitable to the character of one, who was honoured with a commiſſion to reveal the will of God, and to denounce his judgments againſt an impious prince and people. *And Iſaiah ſaid unto them, Thus ſhall ye ſay unto your Maſter, Thus ſaith the* LORD, *Be not afraid of the words which thou haſt heard, wherewith the ſervants of the king of Aſſyria have blaſphemed me. Behold I will ſend a blaſt upon him, and he ſhall hear*

*hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will make him to fall by the ſword in his own land. The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath deſpiſed thee, and laughed thee to ſcorn, the daughter of Jeruſalem hath ſhaken her head at thee. Whom haſt thou reproached and blaſphemed? And againſt whom haſt thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even againſt the Holy One of Iſrael. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage againſt me. Becauſe thy rage againſt me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears; therefore, will I put my hook in thy noſe, and my bridle in thy lips; and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou cameſt**

In confirmation of the truth of this prediction, we are told in the nineteenth chapter of the ſecond book of Kings, above referred to, that *the Angel of the* LORD *went out that night, and ſmote in the camp of the Aſſyrians, an hundred fourſcore and five thouſand; and when they aroſe early in the morning*, ſays the ſacred hiſtorian, *behold, they were all dead corpſes* § ver. 35.

* Iſa. xxxvii. 6, 7—22, 23—28, 29.

§ As it muſt give particular ſatisfaction to the pious and intelligent reader, to trace a coincidence betwixt ſacred and prophane hiſtory, and to remark, that the moſt important facts recorded in the former, are, with as great variety, indeed, as might be expected, in the

He adds, *So Sennacherib king of Aſſyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh; and it came to paſs, as he was worſhipping in the houſe of Niſroch his god, that Addramelech and Sharezer, his ſons, ſmote him with the ſword.*†

Innumerable examples occur in the ſacred writings, of judgments denounced againſt and inflicted upon the Jews, on account of their idolatry and wickedneſs. Out of many that might be mentioned, I ſhall at preſent ſingle out only one of the moſt remarkable, their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, foretold by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as a judgment which was to be inflicted upon them, upon account of their aggravated tranſgreſſions, the accompliſhment of which pre-

circumſtances of thoſe facts, related likewiſe in the latter, it may not be improper to obſerve, that the dreadful cataſtrophe which is ſaid to have happened to the Aſſyrian monarch and his army, in the paſſage of ſcripture hiſtory above quoted, is hinted at by Herodotus, book 2. chap. 14. where, in accounting for the ſignal overthrow of the Aſſyrian hoſt, he ſays, "a ſwarm of "rats had got into their camp, and eat their bow ſtrings "and ſhield ſtraps." This account of the deſtruction of the Aſſyrian army, though improbable and falſe, in its moſt material circumſtances, ſerves to confirm the capital event, of which the true cauſe is aſſigned in the relation which the ſacred writings give of this overwhelming calamity.

† Verſe 36, 37.

predictions is recorded in the ſecond book of Kings.‡

The prophecy of Ezekiel, indeed, is ſo particular, as to point out the very puniſhment inflicted on Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar, that of the extinction of his ſight, which, with many other remarkable circumſtances, attending the captivity of the Jews, is confirmed both by ſacred and prophane hiſtory.*

Such were the exemplary judgments inflicted on the Aſſyrian monarch and his army, and on the Jewiſh nation, upon account of the national wickedneſs both of the Aſſyrians and Jews. I now proceed,

Secondly, To ſhew, that while the Almighty, in coincidence with the general end of his government, which is the reformation of mankind, inflicts national judgments upon account of national wickedneſs, he ſometimes ſuſpends, mitigates, or removes thoſe

 judg-

‡ Compare Jer. xxv. 8 to 12. Ezek. xii. 12 to 15. with 2 Kings xxiv. xxv.

* The reader hath been already referred to the relation in ſacred hiſtory of the ſignal judgment inflicted on the Jews in their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. He will likewiſe find the various circumſtances attending this captivity foretold by the prophets, and in particular, the very remarkable puniſhment of Zedekiah confirmed by Joſephus, in his hiſtory of the Jewiſh Antiquities. Lib. 10. Cap. 11.

judgments, as occaſions and circumſtances may require; and that in certain emergencies, he beſtows on certain nations, doubtleſs for wiſe reaſons, unexpected national mercies, and works out for them, unexpected and undeſerved national deliverances.

The means which the Supreme Being employs for effecting the great end of his moral government exerciſed over nations, the general reformation and happineſs of mankind, are various and wonderful. Like a wiſe and affectionate parent, he points out to his rational offspring their duty and happineſs; and exhorts them to the practice of the former, in order to the attainment of the latter. When inſtructions and exhortations frequently repeated, fail in producing their intended effect, he reluctantly applies the rod, but uſually gives warning of the blow which he intends to inflict. If this warning make his diſobedient children *ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well*, the object is attained; and the ſmile of complacency and love again irradiates the countenance of the Almighty. If the warning fail in the accompliſhment of its end, the ſcourge is ſhewn, and ſhaken over the heads of guilty nations; and mankind are overawed, awakened and alarmed. The ſinner, conſcious of guilt, trembles under the apprehenſion of merited puniſh-

puniſhment. Aſtoniſhment and terror appear in every face. All look upon each other, with ſilent ſorrow; and wait with anxious ſuſpenſe the blow which is to determine their fate. This blow hath in many inſtances fallen upon the heads of guilty nations in the career of their wickedneſs, of which I have under the former head exhibited two ſtriking examples. Waving however the farther conſideration of the providential chaſtiſements inflicted upon other nations on account of their national vices, let us direct our attention to objects ſtill more intereſting, to thoſe judgments with which our own nation hath been lately viſited; and of which our ſins will, to a ſerious and reflecting mind, very evidently appear to be the cauſe.

Of the judgments, with which this kingdom hath been lately viſited, we may juſtly reckon the American war, now concluded, one of the moſt remarkable; a war, inauſpicious in its beginning, unſucceſsful often in its progreſs, and inglorious in its end. This war, which was in all reſpects a civil one, was carried on, as ſuch conteſts generally are, with relentleſs fury, for above ſeven years, betwixt the ſubjects of the ſame ſovereign, the deſcendants of the ſame anceſtors, united by the kindred ties of one common language, religion, and liberty. The embers of civil diſcord,

diſcord, fanned originally, as ſeems moſt probable, by a ſpirit of ambition and of factious oppoſition to government, ſoon kindled into a moſt deſtructive flame; and involved almoſt the whole continent of North America, in one general conflagration. The contagion, flying from province to province, gathered ſtrength as it flew; and the ſpirit of turbulent faction and of diſappointed ambition, blending itſelf with the maſs of genuine patriotiſm, produced a heterogeneous compoſition of obſtinate reſiſtance, of an impatience of ſubjection, or controul, and of an invincible ſpirit of liberty and independence.

Our natural and invariable enemies, the French, ever jealous of the power of Britain, beholding the progreſs of the conteſt betwixt her and her revolted colonies with malicious pleaſure; and judging the time favourable for humbling a dreaded, and a hated foe and rival, at firſt ſecretly ſupported, and at laſt openly eſpouſed the cauſe of our revolted fellow ſubjects; and having not only entered into a treaty with the Americans, but having, by their artifices and addreſs, engaged the Spaniards and the Dutch, in an alliance againſt us; we ſeemed to be under a neceſſity of giving way at length to ſo formidable an union, and of acknowledging the independ-

dependence of America, the great object of French policy. That object, to the humiliation of Britain, and to the exaltation of her enemies, is now accompliſhed; and this queen of nations, this empreſs of the ſea, which, like another Babylon, ſaid in her heart, *I ſhall be a lady for ever, and ſhall ſee no ſorrow*, is fallen from the pinnacle of her grandeur, from her former rank, and conſequence among the nations of the earth, compelled to reſign thoſe extenſive and valuable territories which were the chief ſources of her national greatneſs, and obliged to acquieſce in the terms of a peace which ſhe was in the uſe of dictating; but which the neceſſity of the times and her exhauſted ſtrength and finances forced her to accept.

What the remote conſequences of this diſmemberment of the Britiſh Monarchy may be, to Britain herſelf, to America, or to the ſurrounding nations, it is impoſſible at preſent for human wiſdom to determine.—— Perhaps that omnipotent Being, who educeth good out of evil, and order out of confuſion, may render this diſmemberment of empire, which we at preſent ſo idly and ſo ineffectually deplore, a mean of promoting a more extenſive commerce, and a more liberal intercourſe among the nations of the earth. Perhaps, under the conduct of a wiſe

and

and unerring providence, it may become a mean of civilizing thoſe numerous tribes of ſavage Indians, who live on the borders of the American provinces, of promoting induſtry and population in thoſe extenſive regions, and of converting the wilderneſs into a cultivated field. Perhaps, if imagination may be permitted to indulge the tranſporting idea, it may, under the direction of ſuch a providence, become a mean of diffeminating learning and every uſeful art among thoſe whom we now call Barbarians, and by the diffuſion of learning, may pave the way for the diffuſion of thoſe more important and ſublime bleſſings, the doctrines aud precepts of the everlaſting goſpel, in *the habitations of darkneſs and cruelty.* If unanimity and wiſdom inſpire the counſels of the American rulers, if ability and virtue give vigour and effect to their adminiſtration, thoſe revolted colonies, united by the congenial ſpirit of genuine patriotiſm, and governed by juſt and equal laws, may one day become a mighty empire, the centre of commerce, and the ſeat of liberty, of learning, and of all the elegant and ornamental, as well as uſeful arts. As theſe conſequences however are diſtant, uncertain and unknown, we muſt regard the loſs of ſo many populous and fertile provinces, as a national misfortune,

tune, and the blood and treaſure expended in that ill fated war into which we were plunged upon account of them, as a national calamity, the effects of which we have already ſeverely felt, and muſt long feel.

Of this awful and humiliating diſpenſation, with which it hath pleaſed the Almighty to chaſtiſe us, our national ſins will, to a ſerious and contemplative mind, very evidently appear to be the cauſe The ignorance and folly, the venality and corruption of our rulers, and the want of unanimity and vigour in their adminiſtration, may have been the immediate means of plunging us into the horrors, and accumulating upon us the diſgraces of this deſtructive war; but the primary and fundamental cauſe of this great national calamity, undoubtedly was our national irreligion and profligacy, our national ſenſuality, diſſipation and luxury, which among the higher ranks in particular have ariſen to an alarming height *. The

* The celebrated Dr. Price, in a ſmall tract, which he publiſhed ſome years ago, upon the ſubject of the American war, makes a very judicious and ſtriking, as well as pious obſervation, on the conduct of the Americans, compared with our own, with regard to the moral and religious improvement of the late awful viſitation of providence, in the war which had broken out betwixt us, and with regard to the probable iſſue of the conteſt.

The American war and its conſequences, though calamities in themſelves ſufficiently great,

As I have not the Doctor's treatiſe at my hand at preſent, I cannot pretend to quote his words; but ſhall, as nearly as I can remember, give the ſenſe of them. The obſervation is to ſome ſuch purpoſe as the following; that from the very different behaviour of the Americans and of us in this iſland, it was eaſy to perceive what ſide divine providence would take, and whoſe cauſe it would eſpouſe in the determination of the grand cataſtrophe of the late war. Throughout the Britiſh colonies in America, there was nothing to be ſeen but faſting and humiliation, nothing to be heard, but prayers and ſupplications to the Almighty, preferred with unuſual earneſtneſs and ardour, for his protection and aid. In Britain herſelf, he very juſtly obſerves, that the ſcene was altogether reverſed. There nothing was to be heard among the lower ranks, but oaths and imprecations in every ſtreet, and in every dwelling. Among the higher, nothing was to be ſeen, but madneſs, diſſipation and riots. From this genuine repreſentation of facts and national characters, he very juſtly concludes, that the ſupreme Governour of the univerſe will moſt aſſuredly vouchſafe ſupport and aſſiſtance in ſuch a cauſe to thoſe who are moſt deſerving of his favour; and in the preſent caſe, which of the two is the more deſerving object. he thinks there can be ſcarce a doubt.

What ſtock of national religion and virtue may really exiſt at preſent among our countrymen in America, we ſhall not pretend to determine. The computation, if made with any degree of exactneſs, would certainly be very difficult. If the reports of travellers, indeed, and of thoſe who have long reſided in that country, may be depended on, the Americans, before the late war, were

great, were not the only ones with which this nation hath been of late afflicted.

The not, it muſt be confeſſed, much more virtuous than their neighbours. Our Weſt Indian planters, and our Britiſh Eaſt India Nabobs, it is well known, outſtrip their countrymen at home in luxury, and in all the vices to which luxury and wealth give birth; and thoſe adventurers, from our own iſland, who have in the courſe of the preſent century made opulent fortunes in the North American provinces, have found it no difficult matter to tranſplant the vices of their own country beyond the Atlantic, where they have grafted them on a ſtock, and reared them in a ſoil, too favourable for their growth and propagation. There are times and occaſions however, which call forth the latent principles of virtue into action, and kindle the ſmothered ſparks of patriotiſm into a bright and ſteady flame. This favourable juncture, this great occaſion, our countrymen abroad ſeized and improved.

Loaded as they were, or believed themſelves ſo to be, with oppreſſive taxes, they at firſt murmured, complained, and remonſtrated. From complaints and remonſtrances, they proceeded to a determined oppoſition to the executive powers of government. They ſounded the trump of rebellion (ſhall I ſay?) or of liberty; multitudes flocked to their ſtandards from all quarters; and the animating call *pro patria & libertate, pro aris & focis*, reſounded through the American provinces. In the whole courſe of this ill fated war, it is obvious, that the colonies had the advantage in the motives from which they fought, over the mother country. The former contended for freedom and independence, motives of themſelves capable of inſpiring the greateſt ef-

The diſſenſion and diſcord, which very recently reigned both in the cabinet and in our national councils, the baneful effects of turbulent

ſorts, and of enabling thoſe who are actuated by them in a high degree, of accompliſhing the greateſt enterprizes; the latter contended only for the re-eſtabliſhment of that dominion which ſhe had long enjoyed, and which ſhe conſidered as her rightful claim. In this ſtruggle, ſhe had properly ſpeaking no glory to acquire; and that powerful incentive of fighting for the honour of the Britiſh name and nation, which againſt foreign enemies, has often proved of remarkable efficacy, in the atchievement of great actions, could not in the preſent caſe, poſſeſs its uſual influence and ſtrength. The ideas of country and of kindred will ruſh upon the ſuſceptible mind, and will even make the profeſſed ſoldier, who is accuſtomed to ſcenes of horror and death, if he is not deſtitute of ſenſibility, ſhudder at the thought of ſhedding his brother's blood.

Let it not be imagined, that while I am endeavouring to aſſign the cauſes of the ſucceſs of the Americans, in their conteſt with the mother country, I mean to plead their cauſe, or to juſtify their conduct. While I admit that many of their rulers were actuated by a truly patriotic ſpirit, others, it cannot be denied, were guided by a ſpirit of obſtinacy, of ambition, and of faction, which paſſed with the credulous multitude for genuine patriotiſm. But a ſtrong deſire of liberty and independence was predominant in the minds of by far the greateſt part of them, (a paſſion which of itſelf inſpires and prompts the boldeſt undertakings) and this paſſion, aided by a ſenſe of religion, and a humble reliance on

bulent faction and diſappointed ambition, and which were one great ſource of the miſfortunes of the war, entailed on this unhappy

divine providence for ſupport and aſſiſtance in the conduct of the war, a reliance to which their dangerous ſituation very naturally led them, finally enſured their ſucceſs in the cauſe in which they were engaged.

While the cauſes above mentioned account for the ſucceſs of the Americans, the confuſion and fluctuation which prevailed in our counſels; the want of virtue and public ſpirit, in the miniſters of our ſovereign; the diſſenſions which reigned both in the cabinet and in the field; and above all, the irreligion and diſſolute manners of the chief ranks in the ſtate, too viſibly appear to be the cauſes of the accumulated diſgraces and loſſes we ſuſtained in the courſe of the late war.

Though it be a difficult matter to make a juſt eſtimate of the aggregate ſtock of national virtue or vice, or of the degrees of either prevalent in one age or country, compared with thoſe prevalent in another country or age, we may, I think, venture to affirm, without any juſt imputation on our charity or candour, that the preſent age in particular, hath, for ſome time paſt, been not only on the decline in point of national virtue, but that its declenſion hath been very rapid.

As I would not wiſh to advance any aſſertion to the diſcredit of my country, without being able to bring inconteſtible evidence of its truth, I ſhall mention ſome faſhionable vices and follies, and ſome prevalent crimes, which ſeem to me very characteriſtical of the preſent times; and which, I think, muſt be allowed to indicate the ſuperior degeneracy of the preſent age, compared

by country an additional calamity to those it already laboured under.

Faction with any preceding period since the revolution. For this purpose I single out that striking feature in the character of the higher ranks in particular, the profanation of the Sabbath and the neglect and contempt of public worship. In whatever light this too fashionable conduct may appear in the eyes of some young gentlemen of spirit of the present times, it will be regarded by the more sober and serious part of mankind, as a fatal symptom of a want of religious principle, and as a sure indication of dissolute manners and of a falling state. But I do not rest the strength of my argument upon this single proof, however striking and unequivocal. As another incontestible evidence of the truth of my assertion, I would mention the frequent examples in both sexes of infidelity to the marriage bed, beyond what has happened in any former period since the æra above mentioned, of which, besides many strong presumptions and actual discoveries, the multiplied instances of suits for divorces, constitute an irrefragable proof.

The frequent instances of riots, robbery and murder, which have happened, and which of late have considerably increased in their number, instead of being diminished, are a pregnant proof of the depraved and dissolute manners which predominate among the lower ranks in the state

Luxury, it is well known, has made an astonishing progress since the days of our grandfathers, among all classes and conditions of mankind; and luxury brings along with it a train of evils, of the most pernicious tendency to the prosperity and welfare of the state.—

Faction and party ſpirit are indeed among the attendant evils and unavoidable conſequences of a free government.

But

The faſcinating power of this ſorcereſs, has diſcovered itſelf not only in ſtamping additional guilt and infamy on characters that were otherwiſe worthleſs, but in debauching minds of an high order, which one might have expected to have riſen ſuperior to her ſordid allurements.

Before the concluſion of that glorious war which was terminated in the year 1763, this enervating power had ſpread her influence far and wide. But this influence was, during that war, oppoſed and counteracted by the ardent and active ſpirit which then prevailed, and by an unextinguiſhable paſſion for glory, which was tranſfuſed by the abilities and patriotiſm of a great miniſter, through our fleets and armies, rendering them every where victorious and irreſiſtible. Britain was then in the meridian of her power and grandeur; ſhe held the balance in her hand, and gave law to the nations of Europe. It is a melancholy and painful reflection to one who feels for the honour of his country, to think of the diſaſtrous change that has taken place in her ſituation ſince that time. Intoxicated with her proſperity and power, ſhe abuſed both, and providence has juſtly puniſhed her pride, and given an awful warning and an inſtructive leſſon both to herſelf, and to ſurrounding nations, in her misfortunes and in her fall. Happy will it be for Britain in particular, if in the day of her adverſity ſhe learn wiſdom and moderation from her loſſes and diſgrace. She may then once more raiſe her head among the nations; and in ſpite of the jealouſy and in-

But, when that ſpirit, diſdaining controul, riſes to unbounded exceſs, and dares with ſacrilegious hand to invade the prerogative of the ſovereign, or the rights of the people, it becomes one of the greateſt calamities with which a nation was ever ſcourged, and one of the ſureſt ſymptoms of a tottering ſtate. Theſe providential chaſtiſements are indeed awful and ſtriking.

I would direct your attention, however, to a calamity with which this part of the united kingdom was lately threatened, more intereſting to its inhabitants than any of thoſe I have yet mentioned, as it more immediately and intimately affected themſelves. The calamity I have in my eye, was that of the danger of a general famine, ariſing from the ſcantineſs of the crop of 1783, and from the much greater and more alarming ſcantineſs and deficiency of the preceding one. The pale and emaciated countenances which were every day exhibited to our view, and the too ſtriking ſignatures of want and miſery which were viſible in thoſe countenances, and which gave ſuch pain to the feeling heart, were too affecting

fidious arts of her ancient rival, and the open and avowed oppoſition of her combined enemies, may aſſert and eſtabliſh her claim to the honour of being the firſt maritime power in the world.

affecting teſtimonies of the general diſtreſs to be ever obliterated from our minds.

With what lively and ardent gratitude, therefore, ſhould we look up to Almighty God, who by a moſt ſeaſonable and evident interpoſition of providence, firſt mitigated the impending calamity, and then by a plentiful crop removed the danger, and diſpelled our fears.

This brings me to the conſideration of that double deliverance wrought out for us at a moſt critical time, by a peace ſucceeded by plenty, a deliverance from the horrors of war and famine at once.

Though the war was in general neither glorious nor honourable, and though the peace we now enjoy was purchaſed by the loſs of the revolted provinces of America, and of ſome of our Weſt Indian iſlands, yet this event was, in the exhauſted ſtate of the nation, with the horrors of famine impending over our heads, deſirable almoſt upon any terms; and we have the greateſt reaſon to adore the divine goodneſs, in relieving us by one ſignal interpoſition of providence in our favour, from the danger and expence of a ruinous war, and from the ſtill greater danger of a general want of the neceſſaries of life. Had the war continued, we ſhould not only have loſt many more lives highly uſeful,

and ornamental to the community, but we ſhould have ſunk under a load of national debt, with which the ſtate is already well nigh overwhelmed; and which is more dreadful ſtill, had the war continued, we ſhould have experienced all the diſtreſs and horrors of a general famine. From thoſe direful evils we were effectually relieved by the general and peculiarly ſeaſonable ceſſation of arms, which took place at the very time that theſe evils became certain and imminent. It is well known, that of the crop of one thouſand ſeven hundred and eighty two, there was ſcarce a third part neceſſary for the conſumption of the inhabitants; and that great numbers muſt conſequently have died of real famine, had not the different ports of the kingdom, by the termination of the war, been opened for the importation of grain, by which means the inhabitants were ſupplied with food, though at an advanced price. What contributed greatly to render the ſupplies for the poor more ſpeedy and more effectual was, the ſale of the ſtores contracted for by government for proviſions for our fleets and armies, which, being now unneceſſary, were imported into every harbour in Scotland, and were of ſignal uſe in relieving the general diſtreſs. Theſe facts, my brethren, fell out under your own obſervation

tion; and, I truſt, that they will never occur to your remembrance, without exciting the moſt fervent gratitude in your minds, towards the infinitely powerful, wiſe and beneficent Ruler of the univerſe, who *ſtilleth the roaring of the waves, and quelleth the madneſs of the people*; *who maketh wars to ceaſe to the end of the earth*; and who, by their ceſſation, opens a ſafe intercourſe betwixt diſtant kingdoms, and facilitates the ſupply of the wants of one nation out of the ſuperabundance of another.

Thus, while God hath in ſome inſtances been pleaſed to inflict providential chaſtiſements upon us, on account of our national ſins, he hath likewiſe mitigated and removed theſe chaſtiſements; and in order to lead us to repentance, and allure us to our duty, hath wrought out for us unexpected and undeſerved national deliverances *

But what, let me now aſk has been our improvement of thoſe various diſpenſations? Have

* At the time when this diſcourſe was delivered, tho' the crop was plentiful, the danger of a continued, perhaps ſtill greater ſcarcity, was impending over our heads, from a late and precarious harveſt. The author however is happy in obſerving, that as the crop is now gathered in very ſafely, we have the higheſt grounds of thankfulneſs to God, who giveth us the fruits of the earth in abundance.

Have the humiliation and ſorrow which we profeſſed on the days of national faſt during the war, been productive of real reformation. and iſſued in *fruits meet for repentance?* Is our gratitude to God for his goodneſs in terminating the war, and affording us the proſpect of plenty, that gratitude by which we profeſs to be actuated on this day of national thankſgiving, in any degree proportioned to the benefits conferred? I earneſtly wiſh, for the credit and happineſs of my countrymen, that I could anſwer theſe queſtions in the affirmative. I will not ſay, that we are yet arrived at ſuch an incorrigible degree of depravity, as like that of Pharaoh, when he *would not let the children of Iſrael go*, hardens the heart againſt the natural impreſſions of the divine mercies and judgments; but I fear, we are verging towards it; and though I will not preſume to affirm, that we are abandoned to a judicial blindneſs and infatuation, I may ſurely venture to aver, that a ſpirit of ſtupefaction and ſlumber hath overtaken us; and that though *we have eyes, we ſee not, and though we have ears, we hear not, neither do we underſtand. After all that is come upon us, for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs*, we are neither alarmed nor awakened from our ſecurity; but like the Iſraelites of old, when the thunder of omnipotence ceaſed

to

to vibrate in their ears, *we eat and drink, and ariſe to play*, equally regardleſs of the divine judgments and mercies, and of the reaſons for which the former are inflicted, and the latter are beſtowed. *Shall I not viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord? Shall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this?*

For my own part, I cannot help obſerving, that the diſpenſations of providence, myſterious and unſearchable as they often are, by our limited capacities, ſeem to me to have been ſufficiently intelligible in their language to Britain, during the laſt thirty years of her hiſtory in particular. In the war before laſt, this kingdom, with the aſſiſtance of thoſe colonies, which are now for ever ſevered from it, oppoſed the combined forces of France, and Spain; and was victorious and triumphant in all quarters of the world. At the concluſion of this glorious and ſucceſsful war, Britain ſaw with exultation, a great acceſſion of territory added to her former empire; ſhe ſaw her revenues increaſing, her commerce flouriſhing, new reſources opening from the extent of her trade, and wealth pouring its tide from a thouſand channels into her capacious harbours. This was the æra of her glory, when ſhe had reached the higheſt point of national greatneſs. It was that lofty point, that critical elevation, on which

which the fate of nations and of empires often hangs; and which for a while either eſtabliſhes their proſperity and grandeur, or accelerates their downfall. That elevation, as I already obſerved, Britain, in the hour of her proſperity and preſumption, inſolently abuſed. The impolitic meaſures adopted by our miniſtry in the beginning of the late war, the want of vigour and effect in their adminiſtration, partly occaſioned by their want of ability, partly by the fluctuation and diſcord in the counſels of our Sovereign, conſpired to haſten that portentous revolution in the annals of Britain, the diſmemberment of her empire.

Though the hand of God hath been viſibly lifted up againſt us, in the accompliſhment of a revolution, which hath ſo materially diminiſhed the power and conſequence of Britain, we ſeem neither to have regarded nor attended to *the operation of his hands*. We are yet ſcarce routed or awakened by the blow. Luxury and corruption have reaſſumed their wonted reign; their baneful influence is conveyed through the chief ranks in the ſtate: and the ſtreams which iſſue from thoſe impure fountains, deluge our land with the overflowings of ungodlineſs.

I ſhall cloſe this branch of my ſubject with obſerving, that if the providential chaſtiſe-

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ments abovementioned, and particularly that ſignal check given to our preſumption and pride, by the loſs of ſo great a part of the Britiſh empire, fail in their intended effect of reforming our diſſolute manners, and eſpecially our corruption and luxury, we have juſt reaſon to apprehend, that the calamities denounced againſt the Jews in the following prediction, and which were literally accompliſhed upon them, will likewiſe be finally executed upon the inhabitants of this highly favoured, but ill deſerving iſland. *And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it ſhall be eaten up; and will break down the wall thereof, and it ſhall be trodden down; and I will lay it waſte. It ſhall not be pruned, nor digged; but there ſhall come up briars and thorns. I will alſo command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it!* words of dreadful emphaſis and import! God forbid that we ſhould ever know their meaning from our experience of the calamities which they imply; for in their true ſenſe, they amount to a threatening of an utter deprivation of the two greateſt bleſſings which a human being can enjoy, civil and religious liberty.

III. I come therefore in the laſt place to ſhew, that if neither the more favourable and gentle,

gentle, nor even the more ſevere diſpenſations of providence, produce their intended effect on guilty nations, they have juſt ground, from reaſon and the natural courſe of things, from the declarations of ſcripture, and from the cataſtrophes of other nations, to dread utter deſtruction.

If all the means, whether more gentle and favourable, or more ſevere, which the divine wiſdom and goodneſs have deviſed for the reformation of mankind, ſhould, through their own perverſeneſs and folly, prove ineffectual for this purpoſe; if neither mercies conferred, nor deliverances wrought out, can allure a nation to their duty, nor judgments threatened and executed can deter them from wickedneſs, *their deſtruction cometh ſpeedily, and that without remedy.* When any nation is in this laſt ſtage of moral depravity, in this ſtate of irreclaimable and deſperate wickedneſs, their puniſhment, as a warning and terror to others, is commonly very dreadful and exemplary. The puniſhment of ſuch a nation uſually bears a proportion to the number, nature, and enormity of their crimes, and to the rapidity of their career in wickedneſs.

The body politic, and the natural body of the individual are, in many reſpects, very ſimilar. Vice ſometimes makes a very rapid pro-

progreſs in both; and her ſteps are very eaſily traced, becauſe the tranſition, tho' quick, is very ſtriking. In other caſes, the progreſs is ſlow and gradual, and the devaſtations of this monſter in either, can ſcarce be perceived by the moſt attentive obſerver; unleſs he ſhould take a view of them from two diſtant and oppoſite points, in which caſe, he would perceive with aſtoniſhment the prodigious change, and the perfect contraſt.

As this remark may require illuſtration, I will explain my meaning by an example:

Suppoſe a young man, of a good conſtitution, virtuouſly educated, and inured from his infancy to habits of temperance and activity, preſented to your notice. You will immediately obſerve that florid bloom, which is the indication of health; and in every muſcular motion, you will diſcern that agility and vigour, which are the effects of a ſound conſtitution, corroborated by exerciſe. Suppoſe this ſame youth, in the bloom of life, launching out into the world, without experience, and without a guide, unhappily falling into bad company; and what is a moſt deplorable caſe, gradually corrupted by bad example. Suppoſe him gradually initiated, by his new and lewd companions, in ſcenes of debauchery and riot: (for, to a young man educated in virtue, the progreſs

in vice will be with ſlow, gradual, and reluctant ſteps) ſuppoſe corrupt principles inſtilled into the too flexible mind, and the dictates of conſcience, at length, overborne by the importunity and force of combined temptations, aided by vicious exhortation and example, and the depravation of the unhappy youth is rendered complete. He plunges headlong into the ſame abyſs of intemperance and lewdneſs with his aſſociates, with as much eagerneſs as they, and emulates them in debauchery. Take a view of him now from the oppoſite point, above-mentioned, without taking in the intermediate ſteps, and you have as ſtriking a contraſt as can be eaſily conceived. View him at one end of the line, and you perceive a ruddy and vigorous youth, whoſe body is the ſeat of temperance and health, and whoſe mind is the receptacle of ſobriety and virtue. View him at the oppoſite extremity of the line, (an extremity which, perhaps, he has reached in the ſhort, but buſy, period of three or four years,) and you are amazed and ſhocked at the ſudden change: You perceive a youth of four and twenty, with the conſtitution of a man of eighty: You behold him with palſied hands, with emaciated limbs, with a pale ſhrivelled countenance, with a head covered with untimely ſnow, with a body debilitated by diſeaſe, and

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conſuming with putrefaction, an object of deformity and horror to the ſickening eye! Such is the gradual progreſs and decline in the body politic, from virtue to vice, from vigour to weakneſs, from ſound health to a total decay. Only, let it be obſerved, that the tranſition, from the one to the other, is not ſo quick, nor the change ſo ſudden, in the community as in the individual; becauſe, the barrier of wholeſome laws, the general current of virtuous manners, and the prevailing influence of good example, conſpire, for ſome time, to ſtem the torrent of iniquity.

Contemplate a ſmall republic, in its infancy, governed by ſeveral virtuous citizens; or a ſmall monarchy, governed by one wiſe and virtuous ſovereign; the ſubjects of the one, or the citizens of the other, educated in habits of temperance and virtue; and you have the image of a happy ſociety living in harmony and peace. Contemplate this ſtate enlarging its bounds, ſubjecting its neighbours, catching the contagion of their vices, gradually corrupted and enervated by luxury, and ſunk in ſenſuality and ſloth; and you have a ſtate, the very reverſe of the former. Compare theſe oppoſite ſtages, as in the former caſe, without the intervening ones, and the contraſt ſtrikes every eye. But the different

means, by which the change that aſtoniſhes us ſo much in both caſes, hath been produced, and the effects of theſe means, can only be traced by a very careful and accurate obſerver.

Luxury, in a free ſtate, and in its earlier ſtages, is ſlow, partial, and gradual in its progreſs; becauſe, it is powerfully counteracted by oppoſite principles and manners. But, in the more advanced periods of this ſtate, when it becomes more extenſive, and increaſes in grandeur and in wealth; when luxury flows in with wealth, and venality and corruption with luxury; when vices of every name and enormity conſpire to ſwell the torrent, the land is deluged by the flood of iniquity; and the ſtate is, with headlong impetuoſity, precipitated to deſtruction.

Theſe conſequences, ſo perfectly conſonant to right reaſon, are juſt what might be expected, and invariably follow, in what is called, the natural courſe of things, and the ſettled order of Providence. We may add, that they are in fact, the poſitive appointment of God, who has connected the miſery of the individual with the practice of vice, and national vice, in its exceſs, with national ruin. This plan of the moral government of God, exerciſed over nations, as well as over individuals, in the puniſhment of wickedneſs,

ednefs, is indeed very evident, from the invariable conſequences of vice to both. That this plan is agreeable to the divine will, and that it is the plan eſtabliſhed by the divine juſtice and wiſdom, for the government of the world, is farther confirmed, by a variety of poſitive declarations of ſcripture, which uniformly concur, in denouncing national judgments and national ruin on national wickedneſs in its exceſs. *The Lord's throne*, ſays the pſalmiſt, *is in heaven; his eyes behold, and his eye-lids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his ſoul hateth. Upon the wicked he ſhall rain ſnares, fire and brimſtone, and an horrible tempeſt: this ſhall be the portion of their cup. The wicked ſhall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.**

Moſes, that eminent prophet and lawgiver of the Jews, while he acquaints them, that the wickedneſs of the natives of thoſe lands, which they poſſeſſed, was the cauſe of their expulſion and exciſion, very plainly intimates to them their own fate, ſhould they imitate the vices of their predeceſſors; and we may be aſſured, that the ſame judgments, or judgments, equally terrible, and ſimilar to thoſe executed upon the children of Iſrael, ſhall, finally, overtake thoſe guilty nations, which have

* Pſal. xi. 4, 5, 6. Pſal. ix. 17.

have filled up the meaſure of their iniquities. *And it ſhall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and ſerve them, and worſhip them, I teſtify againſt you this day, that ye ſhall ſurely periſh. As the nations which the Lord deſtroyeth before your face, ſo ſhall ye periſh; becauſe ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God.*†

It only remains for me to ſhew, in particular inſtances, that ſuch cataſtrophes have been denounced againſt, and have actually happened, to nations diſtinguiſhed by their wickedneſs.

I have already, in a preceding part of this diſcourſe, brought examples of particular judgments inflicted on guilty nations, judgments which entailed heavy calamities and partial deſtruction on thoſe nations. I am now to bring examples, of ſtill more dreadful and overwhelming calamities, which overtook nations eminently wicked, and which terminated not in their partial, but total deſtruction.—— Out of many examples, of divine judgments inflicted, as the puniſhment of national wickedneſs in its exceſs, that might be mentioned, I ſhall ſelect two of the moſt remarkable:—the ſubverſion of the ſecond Aſſyrian Monarchy by Cyrus the Great, and the entire demolition of the temple and city

† Deut. viii. 19, 20.

city of Jeruſalem by Titus, together with the maſſacre of many of its inhabitants, by the enemy, and by each other, and the diſperſion of the remainder; both of them predicted in the ſacred writings, and amply confirmed by the teſtimony of profane authors.

We are aſſured, from undoubted authority, that the Aſſyrians, at the time when Babylon, the glory of the Chaldees excellency, was aſſaulted, and their monarchy overturned by Cyrus, were remarkably degenerate, and diſtinguiſhed by their luxury, and by thoſe vices which flow from it. It was in order to puniſh the pride, the impiety, and the cruelty of the Aſſyrian Monarch and his ſubjects, to the oppreſſed and captive Jews, that God called and ſent forth Cyrus, as the miniſter of his vengeance, on purpoſe to execute his judgments upon a wicked prince and people.

As the deſtruction of Babylon is one of the moſt important and ſtriking events, recorded either in ſacred or prophane hiſtory, the cauſes of this event, and the various circumſtances attending it, are pointed out in the prophetical writings, with a degree of perſpicuity and preciſion, ſeldom to be met with in the ſtyle of prophecy, which is commonly figurative, dark, and ambiguous.

The cauſes and ſuddenneſs of this deſtruction,

tion, the nations to be employed in the accompliſhment of it, the very manner in which it was to be effected, and the total deſolation of this great and imperial city, of which not a veſtige was to remain, are all exactly and minutely foretold in the following paſſages of Jeremiah.

For lo, I will raiſe and cauſe to come up againſt Babylon, an aſſembly of great nations from the north country, and they ſhall ſet themſelves in array againſt her: from thence ſhe ſhall be taken.— And Chaldea ſhall be a ſpoil. The reaſons which he aſſigns for this calamity, are their luxury and cruelty. *Becauſe ye were glad, becauſe ye rejoiced, O ye deſtroyers of mine heritage, becauſe ye are grown fat as the heifer at graſs, and bellow as bulls.* *

An extraordinary degree of divine illumination appears in the following verſes, which conclude with a ſublime apoſtrophe to this mother of harlots and abominations, foretelling her doom. *Make bright the arrows; gather the ſhields. The Lord hath raiſed up the ſpirit of the kings of the Medes; for his device is againſt Babylon, to deſtroy it, becauſe it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple. O thou that dwelleſt upon many waters, abundant in treaſures, thine end is come, and the meaſure of thy covetouſneſs*

* Jer. l. 19. 11.

covetouſneſs.* The prophet likewiſe points out the means, by which this great cataſtrophe was to be brought about, the turning of the courſe of the Euphrates, and laying its channel dry. *A drought is upon her waters, and they ſhall be dried up*. †

Iſaiah, to whom a very full and clear revelation of this great cataſtrophe had been vouchſafed, is ſo particular in the prediction of it, as to diſtinguiſh the illuſtrious prince by whom it was to be accompliſhed, by his name, and to point out ſome of the moſt memorable circumſtances in the aſſault of this capital of the Aſſyrian empire. *Thus ſaith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whoſe right hand I have holden, to ſubdue nations before him, and I will looſe the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates ſhall not be ſhut. I will go before thee, to make the crooked places ſtraight. I will break in pieces the gates of braſs, and cut in ſunder the bars of iron. And I will give thee the treaſures of darkneſs, and hidden riches of ſecret places, that thou mayeſt know that I the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Iſrael. For Jacob my ſervant's ſake, and Iſrael mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name. I have ſirnamed thee, tho' thou haſt not known me.* ‡ It is unneceſſary to inform the

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* Jer. li. 11. 13. † Jer. l. 38. ‡ Iſ. xlv. 1. 2. 3. 4.

intelligent reader, that the promiſe of opening the two leaved gates, and the aſſurance, that they ſhould not be ſhut, point out the predeſtined infatuation of the guards, who, on a night of univerſal and unbounded feſtivity, had left them open, by which means the conqueror and his victorious troops, after having paſſed the channel of the Euphrates, now dried up, in conſequence of its waters having been turned into another bed, obtained eaſy acceſs into the heart of the city, ſurpriſed the impious monarch and his nobles, drowned in wine and ſleep, after their intemperate banquet, and cloſed the ſcenes of madneſs and riot with indiſcriminate ſlaughter, overturning by one deciſive blow the Aſſyrian empire from its foundation.*

Thus was the prophecy of Jeremiah fulfilled in the dreadful maſſacres which followed this impious debauch. *In their heat, I will make their feaſts; and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and ſleep a perpetual ſleep, and not wake, ſaith the Lord.* † The total deſolation of Babylon, predicted by Iſaiah, with ſuch particular circumſtances, and in ſuch pictereſque language, is one of the moſt remarkable events recorded either in ſacred

* Cyrop. lib. vii. page 189. † Jer. li. 39.

ſacred or prophane hiſtory; and as it is atteſted by the moſt credible authors, both ancient and modern, it furniſhes one ſtriking and inconteſtible proof of the divine inſpiration of thoſe books, in which the propeſies reſpecting it are contained. *And Babylon the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees excellency, ſhall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It ſhall never be inhabited, neither ſhall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither ſhall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither ſhall the ſhepherds make their folds there; but wild beaſts of the deſert ſhall lie there, and their houſes ſhall be full of doleful creatures; and owls ſhall dwell there, and ſatyrs ſhall dance there. And the wild beaſts of the iſlands ſhall cry in their deſolate houſes, and dragons in their pleaſant palaces, and her time is near to come, and her days ſhall not be prolonged.* *

But the moſt ſtriking example of the effects of national wickedneſs in its exceſs, to be

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* Iſaiah xiii. 19. 20. 21. 22. Strabo, lib. 16. p. 38. Says, that part of Babylon was deſtroyed by the Perſians, and the remainder by time, and the neglect of the ſucceſſors of Alexander, after Seleucia was built in its neighbourhood by Seleucius Nicator. Pliny confirms the accompliſhment of the prophecy reſpecting the deſtruction of this great city, by obſerving that by the vicinity of Seleucia, it was in his time almoſt reduced to a deſert, lib. 6. 26. See the remarks of St. Jerom likewiſe on the 13th of Iſaiah.

met with in hiſtory, is that exhibited in the final and complete extermination of the Jews, by the Romans, forty years after our Saviour's death. This wretched people, whom neither the moſt ſignal mercies and deliverances, nor the moſt terrible judgments could reform, having filled up the meaſure of their iniquities, by the crucifixion of the divine Author of our religion, were at laſt abandoned to their miſerable fate. The Romans, having inveſted Jeruſalem, the inhabitants of which had, with an animoſity and rage beyond example, exerciſed the moſt cruel barbarities upon each other, took it by aſſault, and ſlaughtered its devoted inhabitants, without diſtinction of age or ſex; and the remainder, being either reduced to a ſtate of abject bondage, or ſcattered over the face of the whole earth, continues, to this day, a ſeparate and unmixed people, an aſtoniſhment, a hiſſing, and a by-word, to the ſeveral nations among which they have been driven, a ſtanding monument of the effects of national wickedneſs in its extreme.§

Let us now attend to the improvement that

§ See the prophecies of our Saviour, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, reſpecting the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the diſperſion of the Jews, compared with the hiſtory of thoſe calamitous events related by Joſephus *de bello Judaico*. Lib. vii. cap. 16, 17, 18.

that may ariſe from the obſervations that have been made, and from the examples that have been exhibited, in the preceding part of this diſcourſe.

From theſe obſervations, ſupported by facts and examples, it hath appeared, that in the ordinary courſe of the moral government of God, exerciſed over nations, national ſins have been uſually followed by national judgments; that ſuch judgments are ſometimes inflicted, ſometimes mitigated, ſuſpended, and removed; that ſignal mercies are ſometimes beſtowed, and ſignal deliverances wrought out, even for guilty nations, in order to give time for repentance, and allure them to their duty; but that, when all thoſe methods of the divine procedure, both by the more gentle and favourable, and by the more ſevere diſpenſations of Providence, prove ineffectual for the accompliſhment of their intended purpoſes, thoſe nations, among whom vice hath ariſen to a high degree of enormity, are abandoned to their fate; and are either ſubjected to the power of their enemies, or, by ſome ſignal judgment, exterminated from the face of the earth, as a warning and terror to ſurrounding nations.

What uſeful leſſons, what ſalutary improvement, if we are wiſe, may we derive from an attentive obſervation of the ways of Pro-

Providence, and of the divine diſpenſations to other nations, as well as to our own! *When the divine judgments are abroad in the earth*, ſays an inſpired writer, *the inhabitants of the world will learn righteouſneſs*. Let us contemplate thoſe judgment with awful reverence; and let us make this improvement of them: Let us reform our manners, and cultivate univerſal righteouſneſs; and then, we may reaſonably hope, that national proſperity ſhall again be built upon the baſis of national virtue. Men may ſpeculate as much as they pleaſe. Politicians may preſcribe alteratives and palliatives for the diſeaſed body politic; but theſe, where *the whole head is ſick, and where the whole heart is faint*, will prove only like the medicines of an empiric, adminiſtered to a patient, whoſe diſeaſe has baffled the ſkill of the moſt able phyſicians. In ſhort, nothing but genuine patriotiſm, and national religion and virtue, generally prevalent among the people, can raiſe a fallen, or a falling, ſtate, to real proſperity and greatneſs.

I cannot conclude this diſcourſe, without hinting at the improvement which all of us are concerned to make, of the awful viſitations of divine Providence, in the American war, and in the late dearth and ſcarcity of grain, by deep humiliation upon account of our ſins, the original cauſes of national judgments,

ments, and by fervent gratitude to the Almighty, for his providential interpoſition, in the manner above-mentioned, for our relief from the horrors of war and famine at once. Let the rich conſider the obligation, which their wealth lays them under, to ſupply the wants of the poor, who would *be glad to eat of the crumbs which fall from their table.* Let the landlord learn to contemplate the diſtreſſes of his tenants, with a feeling heart, and with a pitying eye, and remember that he is bound in juſtice, as well as humanity, to remit to them, in proportion to the unavoidable deficiency of their late crops, a part of thoſe rents, which Providence, by blaſting the fruits of the earth, has not enabled them to pay; ever mindful, that *he who oppreſſeth the poor, reproacheth his Maker.* Let the tenant beware of oppreſſing thoſe whom Providence has ſubjected to his power. Let the ſervant beware of inſolence to his maſter: and let him learn moderation and contentment with his lot, and with his wages. Let thoſe who are guilty of the crime of grinding the face of the poor, by extortion, reflect, that by ſuch a conduct, they wreſt the ſcourge from the hand of their Maker, and tear with ſcorpions thoſe whom he only meant to chaſtiſe with whips; and that *they who ſhew no mercy, ſhall be judged without mercy.*

Let

Let all of us, of every rank and character, learn sobriety and temperance, resignation and humility, remembering, that *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.*

TO

TO THE

PROPRIETORS OF LAND

IN

SCOTLAND.

GENTLEMEN,

I Have taken the liberty to inſcribe to you the preceding ſermon, and the following addreſs, upon ſubjects of the higheſt importance in themſelves, and with which your moſt valuable intereſts, either as individuals or as members of ſociety, are very deeply and intimately connected. If the importance of the ſubjects treated in theſe ſmall performances ſhall procure them the honour of your peruſal, the motives which have induced me to publiſh them, will, I truſt, obtain your approbation. Deſirous as I am of promoting the welfare of that ſtate to which I belong, and which has a claim to the beſt exertions of every individual in its favour, I have ventured to ſubmit to your judgment

my ſentiments upon the moſt effectual means of preventing its declenſion and downfall, and of re-eſtabliſhing its proſperity and greatneſs. Your benevolence and candour will, I am confident, incline you to overlook thoſe defects in the execution which your diſcernment may diſcover, in conſideration of the deſign; and while I am ambitious of advancing the true intereſts of the community, of which you conſtitute ſo eſſential and reſpectable a part, I have the conſolation to think, that I ſhall ſecure the ſuffrages of the worthieſt part of that community in favour of the attempt.

As the nature of the compoſition, which is ſuitable to a ſermon, would not admit of my entering ſo minutely into ſome topics connected with the ſubjects handled in it, as I wiſhed to do, I have endeavoured to ſupply this unavoidable deficiency in the following addreſs, in which, dropping for once the ſolemnity of the pulpit ſtyle, and adopting a more eaſy and familiar mode of writing, I have preſumed to deliver my thoughts on ſome ſubjects, that were either ſlightly touched, or wholly omitted in the ſermon, as being judged unſuitable to it; ſubjects, however, which involve the moſt ſerious conſequences, highly intereſting to you, and to the ſtate of which you are members. Let it be

be underſtood, however, that as I am at preſent addreſſing myſelf to gentlemen, ſome of whom occupy ſeats in the great council of the nation, and many of whom are diſtinguiſhed by their rank, knowledge, and elegant accompliſhments, I pretend not to inſtruct, but to remind and to perſuade. In the execution of this delicate taſk, therefore, in which perhaps, I may ſometimes take the liberty to remonſtrate, I ſhall endeavour to maintain that decent and juſt reſpect which I owe to the gentlemen to whom I now write, and at the ſame time that I obſerve as becomes me, the rules of good manners, I ſhall expreſs myſelf with that honeſt freedom which the cauſe of truth and virtue inſpires; and which a miniſter of the goſpel of Chriſt ought upon all occaſions to maintain.

To attempt, gentlemen, formally to prove the neceſſity of religion to the proſperity of a ſtate, would in my opinion be offering an inſult to your underſtanding. It is true indeed, that ſome flimſy theories, dictated by ſingularity and ſelf-conceit, have been invented by very ſhallow politicians for governing mankind, and keeping the world in awe, without the aid of the religious principle. But theſe cobweb ſchemes of a falſe, fantaſtic and licentious philoſophy have been exploded by the wiſe and diſcerning part of

mankind in all ages; and reaſon and experience have born their united teſtimony, not only to the neceſſity of religion to the proſperity of every ſtate, but even to its neceſſity in order to the exiſtence of ſociety itſelf. Accordingly we find, that all the celebrated legiſlators of antiquity, in framing laws for the government of the different ſtates over which they preſided, founded their ſyſtem of adminiſtration upon the broad baſis of religion, as being the only ſure one; well knowing, that many ſecret but enormous crimes may be committed, which the eye of the magiſtrate cannot diſcern, nor the hand of juſtice puniſh; and that without the ſalutary dread of an inviſible and ſuperior power, as the witneſs and judge of human conduct, all the ties of civil ſociety muſt burſt aſunder at once.

It is for this reaſon, gentlemen, that I would beg leave to remind you of the importance of cultivating the religious principle in your own minds, and of co-operating in this inſtance with the clergy, in your endeavours, both by admonition and example, as far as your influence extends, to impreſs upon the minds of your children, your ſervants, your tenants, your inferiors, and your dependants, a ſenſe of the Deity, and of his all-protecting and all-governing providence. Let them

ſee,

ſee, from your conduct, that you reverence and love the Supreme Being; and they will be taught from your example to reverence and to love him. If you are not what the apoſtles of our Lord were, and what the clergy, of all denominations, are, or ought to be, *the ſalt of the earth and the light of the world*, you are like them in one important ſenſe, *a city ſet on an hill.* Your influence reaches far, perhaps, much farther than you yourſelves imagine. But happily for your inferiors, indeed, the influence of your good is much greater than that of your bad example. This difference, however, gentlemen, allow me to tell you, is not much to your credit; for it is partly owing to that natural, but ſalutary, horror, with which innocent minds contemplate the progreſs of ſome of you in vice, partly, (I will not diſſemble) owing to the ſuggeſtions of the clerical order, who reckon it their duty to guard the inferior claſſes of mankind, againſt the contagion of your example, by adminiſtering the proper antidote. That neglect and contempt of religious ordinances, and of public worſhip, which conſtitute a diſtinguiſhing feature in the moral character of the higher ranks, in the preſent age, is, indeed, from the influence of the above-mentioned cauſes, yet confined to theſe, and to the middle claſſes

of

of mankind.—But who can tell how far the poiſon may ſpread? The middle claſſes have already caught the infection from their ſuperiors; and without a general reformation of manners, it will naturally deſcend to the loweſt ranks; and what the conſequences of a want of religious principle, and religious practice, among theſe, may be, I need not, Gentlemen, attempt to tell you. Your own diſcernment will eaſily diſcover thoſe conſequences. They are dreadful in proſpect.—God grant, that we may never experience their reality. I ſhall only ſay, what I may venture to do, without any pretenſions to the ſpirit of prophecy, that if religion ſhall be as generally extinguiſhed among the lower, as it is among the higher claſſes of the nation, the fate of Britain will be as legible, in its final doom, as that of the Aſſyrian Monarch and Monarchy was, in the hand writing upon the walls of the palace of that unhappy prince. Our kingdom, like his, will, literally, *be numbered and finiſhed*: and there will be an end of the Britiſh name and empire at once. If, therefore, Gentlemen, you are deſirous to prevent the ruin of your country; if you have any regard to the morals of your children; if you would not wiſh to ſee your ſons and your minions emulate you in the career of vice; if you expect to find ſobriety,

fidelity,

fidelity, and honeſty, among your ſervants and your tenants, let them ſee that you worſhip and reverence a ſuperior power, to whom, both you and they are all equally accountable.

But though it muſt be confeſſed, and is to be lamented, that a contempt of religious ordinances, and what is worſe, a want of religious principle, is too generally diſcernible among the higher claſſes of mankind, I would not wiſh it to be ſuppoſed, that the cenſure, here thrown out, is intended to be indiſcriminate. The anſwer of the Almighty to the prophet Elijah, bewailing the tranſgreſſions of his countrymen, may, with propriety and truth, degenerate as the times are, be applied to ſeveral young gentlemen of the preſent age, who have piety enough to deteſt the vices, and ſenſe and ſpirit enough to deſpiſe the faſhionable follies practiſed by their coevals and contemporaries. *Yet have I left me ſeven thouſand men, in Iſrael, who have not bowed the knee to Baal.* There are yet among us, ſome who adorn their Chriſtian profeſſion (it were much to be wiſhed that the number were greater) who dare to be ſingularly good, and who ſhine forth bright examples of public and private virtue, amidſt *a crooked and perverſe generation.*

Were the numbers of ſuch examples greater,

er, and were thoſe examples found in the more elevated ſpheres of life, I ſhould not yet deſpair to ſee FASHION, that *ſupreme Arbitreſs of life and manners*, whoſe oracular deciſions poſſeſs, among the higher ranks of mankind, an authority ſuperior to that of Revelation, appear on the ſide of religion and virtue. At preſent, it muſt be confeſſed, the caſe is very different; and while matters continue as they are, the friends of religion will have little to hope for from the influence and ſanction of this capricious indeed, but ſovereign power. What renders the probability of ſuch a change more diſtant, is, that the talents of WIT and RIDICULE have, with virulent purpoſe, and ſometimes with ſingular and deplorable efficacy, been combined with the dictates of FASHION, to deface the fair and auguſt form of Religion, whoſe ſublime aim and beneficial influence, ought to have rendered her the object of ſuperlative veneration and love.

Of all the means ever deviſed by the great enemy of God and man, for ſupporting the kingdom of darkneſs, that of Ridicule hath been found, from experience, to be the moſt ſucceſsful. The champions of modern infidelity, often routed by the advocates for revelation, and completely beaten off the field of controverſy, by the weapons of ſolid argumentation,

mentation, have, of late, varied their mode of attack. Ranging themſelves under the banners of a late elegant and noble author, (Shafteſbury) who, with bold but ineffectual effort, hath endeavoured to exalt the *laughter-loving, lying, and deceitful power* of Ridicule, to the *throne* of Reaſon, and hath pronounced her *ſarcaſtic* ſmile the *teſt* of Truth, they have been contented, humbly, to imitate their great leader, by making *wit* ſupply the place of *judgment;* and deſpairing to gain proſelytes to their cauſe by *ſound reaſoning*, they have attempted to effectuate their purpoſe, by the deſpicable arts of *miſrepreſentation* and *ludicrous exhibition.*

As many are capable to underſtand and reliſh a jeſt, who are neither able nor willing to follow out a ſeries of abſtract reaſoning, the cauſe of *ſcepticiſm* and *infidelity*, which promiſed unlimited indulgence to the paſſions, ſoon found admirers and votaries among the licentious and profligate, who *love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.*— Beware, therefore, Gentlemen, of miſtaking *laughter* for *argument.* Beware of admitting the influence of the *treacherous* and *illuſive* power of Ridicule, either in the affairs of religion, or even in thoſe of common life; for ſhe will infallibly conduct you, by the glare of her *baneful torch*, into thoſe labyrinths

of folly and vice, from which you will never be able to extricate your bewildered feet.

The deluſive medium of ridicule, exhibits neither the *figure*, the *dignity*, nor the *likeneſs* of Religion.— On the contrary, this venerable guide of human life, contemplated through ſuch a medium, appears like a *caricatura* in painting, *diſtorted* in her features, and like an object viewed in a convex ſpeculum, *diminiſhed* in her ſize. In order to ſucceed in this ſpecies of miſrepreſentation, a very ſmall ſhare of *wit*, and a very large proportion of *diſingenuity*, *effrontery*, and *profligacy*, are the only requiſites. If the ſons of *infidelity* and *ſcepticiſm* are afraid of ſhocking the piety of their acquaintance, by directly accuſing our Saviour and his apoſtles of *impoſture* and *enthuſiaſm*, let them inſinuate that theſe laſt, notwithſtanding their *ſimplicity*, had *artifice* enough to impoſe on the credulous multitude, (no matter in the inconſiſtency of ſimplicity with artifice) that the doctrines of chriſtianity originally publiſhed, indeed, (as they are compelled to acknowledge) in an enlightened period, and diffuſed very rapidly, they do not well know *how*, through a great part of the world, were eaſily propagated during the dark ages of the chriſtian church, by the craft of prieſts, who engroſſed the little learning of thoſe times, and found their intereſt

intereſt promoted by the *pious fraud.* Let them drop a few hints with regard to the *futility* of the doctrine of *original ſin*, as fit only to amuſe the vulgar: let them ſneer, with Voltaire, at Solomon's *forty thouſand coach-horſes*, and at the pious and zealous declamations of the Preſbyterian Clergy, againſt the *whore of Babylon*: let them, with Shafteſbury, repreſent the clergy of all denominations, *as a myſterious race of black enchanters*, and let them ſmile, with Bolingbroke, at the *enchanted caſtle, the ſleepy rock, and the burning lake*; and the buſineſs is done at once.—— Thus was Socrates, the prince of ancient philoſophers, and the oracle of heathen wiſdom, arrayed in the garb of Ridicule, by a profligate wit, (Ariſtophanes) and pointed out as an object of deriſion to an ungrateful people, to whoſe inſtruction and reformation he had devoted his life, and who, in vain, endeavoured to expiate their guilt, in his condemnation, by the tears they ſhed, and the monuments they erected to his memory.

Such of you, Gentlemen, as are in any degree converſant with the deiſtical controverſy, cannot fail to have obſerved, that even the lettered infidels, of the preſent age, have wiſely declined examining the authenticity of the chriſtian revelation to the bottom, from a conſciouſneſs, doubtleſs, of being

foiled in the attempt to disprove its truth — Their humble and obsequious admirers, you will remark, scarce skimming the surface, and gleaning a few of the hasty assertions and sarcastic insinuations of their patrons, vainly and wantonly disseminate their doctrines in almost every company that will bear the insult. It is thus, that while the thunder of omnipotence sleeps, every *witling*, and every *babler*, who has learned to affect a contempt of religion and its ministers, (for such contempt is not unfrequently affected) dares, with singular impiety and blasphemy, to reproach his Maker to his face.—— But to return from this digression, if it may be really such, you will give me leave, Gentlemen, to observe, that it there be any thing in this world, which deserves to be treated with reverence and serious attention, it is Religion in general, and the Christian Revelation in particular; a firm faith in whose doctrines, and a steady practice of whose precepts, is no less conducive to the happiness of the individual, than to the order and tranquility of society. If, Gentlemen, you wish to secure your own virtue; if you wish to preserve the innocence and honour of your wives and daughters inviolate, you will cultivate the religious principle, both in them and in yourselves. If you observe the total extinction of

of this principle in the minds of your acquaintance, you may juſtly ſuſpect, that the ſentiments of modern honour will prove a feeble barrier againſt the torrent of impetuous and ungoverned paſſion.‡

I ſhall be told, perhaps, by ſome young Gentlemen of vivacity, who are diſpoſed to conſider the Clergy as an order of men *hired* for the ſupport of religion, that by recommending its cultivation and practice, I am only employed in the way of my *profeſſion*, or, as, perhaps, ſome would chooſe to ſay, of my *trade*. To inculcate a reſpect for religion, by

‡ Of the effects of libertine principles in perverting the natural ſentiments of virtue and vice, we have a ſtriking example, in the declared opinion of one of the ableſt and moſt ſucceſsful labourers in the vineyard of infidelity, the late Mr Hume, who does not bluſh to aſſert, *that adultery is a ſmall matter, though one knows it, and if one knows it not, it is nothing at all.* Ye men of pleaſure and intrigue, who plant ſnares for decoying the unſuſpecting and the innocent, before you too haſtily adopt this *palatable doctrine*, let me adviſe you ſeriouſly to aſk yourſelves, how you would like to perceive its effects in debauching the minds, and corrupting the manners, of your neareſt and deareſt relatives; and whether you would like to ſee the purity and virtue of your families contaminated, and their peace and happineſs deſtroyed, by the prevalence of a doctrine, pregnant with miſery and miſchief to the individual, and with diſorder and confuſion to ſociety?

by every proper mean, is, I confeſs, perfectly agreeable to the ſpirit of my office, which I conſider as honourable in itſelf, and as highly uſeful to the ſtate. But I would beg leave to remind theſe lively gentlemen, that, even in this view of the matter, I do not at preſent appear in the character of an *hireling*.—My efforts in favour of religion, ſuch as they are, muſt, in the preſent inſtance, at leaſt, be conſidered as purely *voluntary*. I am not juſt now addreſſing you, Gentlemen, from the pulpit, in the ſolemn ſtyle of preaching. I am addreſſing you in the free and more eaſy ſtyle of epiſtolary writing; and while I aſſume the reſpectable character of a friend, earneſtly deſirous of promoting your beſt intereſts, I cannot doubt that both my ſuggeſtions and remonſtrances will be received, by the more conſiderate of thoſe to whom I am writing, at this juncture, with the attention and reſpect which they ſhall be found to deſerve.

Next to the cultivation of religion, therefore, and to a reſpect for its ordinances, I would beg leave, Gentlemen, to recommend to you, the cultivation and the practice of genuine patriotiſm, as eſſentially neceſſary to the proſperity of the ſtate, of which you are members.

There has been, of late, among the different

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ent parties engaged in the adminiſtration of public affairs, ſo much profeſſion of patriotiſm alternately, without the reality, that the very name of a patriot, though including in it every great and good quality that can exalt and ennoble our nature, is become obnoxious; becauſe, we have been ſo often impoſed on by high pretenſions to patriotiſm, that were merely intended to ſerve as a cloak, to cover ſelfiſh and ambitious purpoſes. We begin to be, at laſt, upon our guard againſt the cheat, and to ſuſpect, that the ſame tricks, are only going to be repeated to us, by which we have been ſo often deceived and diſappointed. But, Gentlemen, however little of genuine patriotiſm may too evidently appear in the eager ſcramble, and violent contention, for places and penſions, in public life, in which party ſpirit is commonly whetted by perſonal animoſity, and public ſpirit is, among thoſe who are engaged in the buſtle, totally loſt, amidſt the colliſion of jarring paſſions. the veſtal fire is not yet extinguiſhed in our land; and fanned, not by the peſtilential breath of faction, but by the ſtrong and ſteady breeze of a rational and manly oppoſition to arbitrary rule, the dying embers of real patriotiſm may yet revive, and kindle into a flame, that will ſpeedily conſume the droſs of venality and corruption in its blaze.

Though,

Though, as Monteſquieu juſtly obſerves, public ſpirit is not the predominant principle in Monarchical governments, there is certainly great ſcope afforded for the exerciſe of this diſtinguiſhed virtue, in a mixed and limited monarchy, like our own. A Britiſh Houſe of Commons in particular affords an advantageous field for its diſplay. †

If

† It muſt at the ſame time be acknowledged, that however favourable the conſtitution of our government may be to the cultivation and prevalence of public ſpirit, the general current of modern manners, and the unbounded influence and dominion of luxury, are highly unfavourable to both. The rapacity, venality and corruption which too evidently ariſe from this epidemical diſtemper of the times, and which are too conſpicuouſly evident, not only in the election of our members of parliament, but in many of the deliberations and deciſions in the national aſſembly of thoſe repreſentatives of the people, are the bane of patriotiſm, and prove fatal to its moſt active and generous exertions.

After all, notwithſtanding the enervating and corrupting power of luxury, there will always happen, in a free ſtate, and in an enlightened age, favourable conjunctures, in which the proper objects of public ſpirit, will be pointed out by the more intelligent and zealous friends of their country; and by their influence its efforts will be directed and invigorated in the proſecution of thoſe objects. Several conjunctures of this kind have happened, within theſe few years, in our own country. We have ſeen the meaſures of a powerful faction, equally adverſe to the *prerogative* of the Sovereign, and the *rights* of the ſubject, happily fruſtrat-

If the members of that aſſembly were the genuine repreſentatives of a free people; if they voted in all queſtions that came under their deliberation, for the honour and intereſts of the community at large; if they exerted the talents of which many of them are poſſeſſed, and improved the opportunities which occaſionally occur, for promoting the public good, we might yet hope to ſee the loſs of America repaired by the opening of new ſources of power and wealth, the proſperity and glory of our country once more reſtored, and the Britiſh name and nation, as formerly, the envy and terror of ſurrounding nations.

It is not the extent of territory poſſeſſed, which either enriches or aggrandizes the ſtate to which it belongs. No, gentlemen It is the populouſneſs of the ſtate, the encouragement

ed by the almoſt unanimous voice of an injured and indignant people, calling for the diſſolution of a *venal* parliament, which could with no propriety be called *their repreſentatives*. We have ſeen aſſociations formed both of the landed and commercial intereſt, for the purpoſe of obtaining a fairer and freer election both of members of parliament, and of thoſe of town councils, as well as for the purpoſes of ſhortening the duration of parliaments, and increaſing the number of the repreſentatives of the people, in the proſecution of which well meant attempts every friend to his country will wiſh them ſucceſs.

ment given to agriculture and commerce, the improvement of the ſciences, and the arts both liberal and mechanical, and, above all, the eſtabliſhment of wiſe and equal laws for the protection of the lives, privileges, and properties of the inhabitants, which enrich and exalt a ſtate to the ſummit of national greatneſs; and which both qualify and entitle it to take the lead among the neighbouring ſtates and nations, and to become the protector of the oppreſſed, and the arbiter of all Caſt your eye, gentlemen, over the map of the Ruſſian Empire, and you will find it encumbered by its own unwieldy greatneſs. You will ſee immenſe tracks of land in that continent, unimproved and uninhabited by human creatures, and untrodden by human feet. It is true, indeed, that an amazing change hath been made upon the face of the country, and upon the manners of the people, by the activity, fortitude, and wiſdom of its ſovereigns, in the ſhort period of little more than the laſt half century. But much, very much, yet remains to be done, as this empire, if we conſider its extent, is not yet arrived far beyond the infancy of its greatneſs. Permit me therefore to obſerve, what is far more intereſting to us, that the Northern part of this kingdom affords the moſt ample field for improvement. Need I, gentlemen, to ſuggeſt to you, that agriculture and commerce, ma-

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nufactures and fiſheries, are, in this iſland in general, and in the Northern part of it in particular, rich and inexhauſtible funds of national wealth and grandeur, left for public ſpirit to direct, to appropriate, and to improve. Even in the quarter-ſeſſions of the juſtices of the peace, and in other county meetings, theſe and many other ſubjects of real importance, might be propoſed; and if thoſe ſubjects were diſcuſſed with temper, candour and good ſenſe, under the direction of true public ſpirit, we ſhould probably ſee ſchemes of public utility wiſely framed, and ſteadily executed; and affairs of the moſt general concern, and the moſt extenſive emolument, brought under the review of the members of the great council of the nation, by the application and advice of their conſtituents, who, by their joint efforts in promoting the intereſts and proſperity of their country, would deſerve the honourable appellation of real patriots, and the guardians of the rights and privileges of a free people.

Beſides thoſe above-mentioned, there are two objects which I wiſh to exhibit to your view, as what I have ever thought of the firſt magnitude and importance, loudly calling indeed for the attention and interpoſition of the legiſlature, and at the ſame time affording you, in order to bring them by your united

applications, under its review, occaſion for the exertion of your abilities, your public ſpirit, and your humanity at once; and theſe are, an alteration of the mode of puniſhments, with regard to thoſe crimes which are at preſent capital, a proper proviſion for the poor, who are unable to work, and proper employment for ſturdy vagrants who are able. §

At

§ On both the above ſubjects, I ſhall take the liberty in this note to offer a few tranſient ſtrictures.

The capital puniſhment inflicted on theft, has often ſhocked the judicious and humane; and made them wiſh very ardently for an alteration in the criminal laws of this kingdom. Such an alteration is certainly much wanted; as the taking the life of a human being, for ſtealing a cow or a ſheep, is a puniſhment very much diſproportionate to the nature of the crime. Nor has capital puniſhment for ſuch offences, been found from experience to anſwer the end propoſed to be accompliſhed by it, that of deterring others from ſuch practices. I am, ſtrongly inclined to think, that if a houſe of work, and correction, ſurrounded with high walls, were built in each county, either at the expence of government, or by contribution, in which there ſhould be a particular apartment for malefactors, who ſhould, under the direction of proper taſk-maſters, armed with the whip, be ſubjected to hard labour for a limited time (ſuppoſe three years as the term of probation) during which time, they might now and then be inſtructed and admoniſhed by the miniſter, or miſters of the place, where the houſe of correction was built; ſuch a plan would anſwer the intended purpoſe much better, than hanging up a poor fellow like a

At the ſame time that I call upon you, gentlemen, to exert your public ſpirit in a direction, that will be honourable to yourſelves,

dog, as a ſcarecrow to terrify his fellow criminals, who do not ſeem much diſpoſed to take warning from his miſerable fate. After paſſing this time of probation, the culprit might once more be ſent abroad into the world; and if he ſhould there relapſe into his old habits, he ſhould be ſent back again to work and correction, and confined within the walls of the correction yard for life.

With regard to the procuring employment for idle and ſturdy vagrants, the nuiſance of every community in which they are found, and proviſion for the indigent, who, by age or infirmities, are unable to work, though it may be difficult, perhaps impoſſible, to lay down a ſcheme that is perfectly unexceptionable, and attended with no inconveniences of any kind, by which the one claſs might be ſupported, and the other rendered uſeful members of ſociety, I cannot help thinking it poſſible to contrive one, which might anſwer the purpoſe intended, without any rational objection to the plan, or any very material inconveniency attending the execution of it.

Let us ſuppoſe ſome apartments in the houſe, allotted for the reception of criminals, were reſerved for the accommodation of ſturdy beggars. Theſe, when inclined to be idle, might, as in the former caſe, be ſtimulated to work by the dread of the laſh; and after having been inured to labour, for the benefit of the community, for a year, during which time they ſhould be moderately fed and cloathed, they might then probably, after this ſhort apprenticeſhip, be diſmiſſed from the houſe to ſhift for themſelves. If they are ever found begging

ſelves, and highly advantageous to the ſtate, may I hope for your indulgence and attention, while I exhort you to the cultivation of two virtues, no leſs uſeful to yourſelves than to the community; and theſe are, temperance and private economy. Theſe virtues, at all times commendable, the circumſtances of the times ſeem peculiarly to require.

Some young gentlemen of ſpirit, I know, will not very eaſily allow the latter to be ranked

afterwards, they ſhould be apprehended by the officers of the pariſh, where they are ſeen ſtrolling, remanded back to the county work houſe, and ſubjected to a confinement of two years, with an additional taſk. If, after being diſmiſſed a ſecond time, they ſhould once more be found begging, they might be confined, and obliged to labour, till by age or infirmity, they are rendered incapable of it, when they ſhould be ſupported at the expence of the houſe. The other claſs of poor, being from diſeaſe and other infirmities, incapable to earn their bread, might be maintained by a legal aſſeſſment of the land-owners of the different pariſhes, in proportion to their real rents, aided by the kirk-ſeſſion funds, and the weekly contributions of the pariſhioners, which ſhould be thrown into one common ſtock, and the whole put under the management of the miniſter, land-owners, and elders of each pariſh. By this means the wants of the aged, infirm, and diſeaſed poor would be ſupplied, the labour of ſturdy vagrants would be rendered beneficial to that ſociety, of which they had formerly been the dregs; and an end would be put at once to the practice of begging, ſo diſgraceful in a civilized country, and under a mild government.

ranked in the liſt of virtues. I ſhall not diſpute with them about words. If it is allowed that, by a prudent attention to, and a proper improvement of a man's rents and income, he may be enabled to maintain his own independence, and apply a part of what he ſaves to beneficial purpoſes, by ſupplying the wants of others, the quality which teaches and enables a man to make this uſe of wealth, muſt certainly in itſelf be important and valuable. I conſider theſe two qualities or virtues (call them what you pleaſe) united, as indeed equally beneficial to the community and to the individual. Temperance and economy will render thoſe taxes which are impoſed by government, leſs ſeverely felt; and what I regard as of capital importance, theſe qualities, judiciouſly exerciſed, will greatly contribute to ſtem the torrent of vain pomp and luxury, which threaten to deluge our land; and which both enervate and corrupt the inhabitants. By cultivating theſe diſpoſitions, you would indeed in a great meaſure tear up luxury from the root, and contribute to the introduction of that national economy which would help to raiſe a ſinking ſtate.

The advantages reſulting to the individual from their cultivation, are obvious. They would check the extravagance of deſires; and

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you would feel none of thoſe artificial wants which a fantaſtic, and diſtempered imagination, creates for its own torment. By cultivating theſe diſpoſitions, if you are at the ſame time poſſeſſed of real integrity, the avenues to bribery and corruption would be precluded at once; (for what temptation can that man have to ſacrifice his conſcience and his honour, who is in want of nothing?) and whether you are in the number of the electors of the repreſentatives of the people, or of thoſe repreſentatives themſelves, you would in either caſe be able to maintain your own dignity and independence, in oppoſition to the inſidious promiſes, and corrupting influence of the miniſter or the candidate.

Let it not be imagined, gentlemen, that while I exhort you to the practice of temperance and oeconomy, I mean to recommend that ſordid and exceſſive frugality, which extinguiſhes the ſocial ſpirit, and borders upon avarice. Let plenty without profuſion, in proportion to your income, crown your board. Let hoſpitality, politeneſs, and elegance of manners preſide at your table. Let rational converſation improve; and let a free intercourſe of good humour, and of innocent and ſocial mirth, exhilarate your gueſts. But let drunkenneſs be excluded from your chear-

ful

ful and temperate entertainments; let gambling be for ever baniſhed from your houſes, and your haunts.

While I have been exhorting you to the cultivation of thoſe virtues, which are equally beneficial to the individual and to the community, I ſhould conſider this addreſs as eſſentially defective, if I overlooked one object, that may be rendered ſubſervient to the real advantage of both, and which will be found ſignally conducive to your dignity, comfort, and happineſs. It is the improvement of your minds in uſeful knowledge. Many of you, gentlemen, I am conſcious, need no inſtruction upon this point that I can give. While ſome of you are poſſeſſed of genius, and of that beneficial and ornamental learning, which can dignify and embelliſh it, and which, while they render your characters truly reſpectable, become a fund of ſuch exquiſite pleaſure to yourſelves, as neither wealth nor titles can confer, nor diſappointments in the path of ambition deſtroy, I have only to wiſh, that the young gentlemen of the riſing generation, poſſeſſed of affluent fortunes, may, for their own credit and for their country's emolument, follow their predeceſſors in their illuſtrious career. To others who are deſtined to move in a humbler ſphere, and whoſe accompliſhments, whoſe proſpects, and

whoſe fortunes aremore confined, I will preſume to offera few hints, which, if purſued and improved, will lead to a train of ſtudy and of conduct, that will render them valuable members of ſociety, and confer a dignity upon the character of a country gentleman, which, without intending any invidious reflection, one may juſtly ſay, is not always attained.

The cultivation of claſſical learning, will, to thoſe who have a genius, taſte, and leiſure for this kind of ſtudy, prove a rational and inſtructive entertainment, and will, in the hours of languor and inactivity, impart a delicious and elegant pleaſure to the mind, infinitely more refined, than the joys of the banquet, of the chace, or of the gaming table. I appeal to yourſelves, whether the character of a fine gentleman, and accompliſhed ſcholar, or that of a fox-hunter be the more reſpectable; and whether you would chooſe to be a Grandiſon, or a 'Squire Weſtern.

But as many of you, gentlemen, to whom I now write, may have neither inclination, nor time for the ſtudy above mentioned, I will take the liberty to recommend one kind of knowledge, ſtill more uſeful and eſſential to you, and that is, the knowledge of the Britiſh conſtitution. Study gentlemen, this fabric, the envy and the wonder of ſurrounding nations

nations, and endeavour to become acquainted, with its riſe, its progreſs, its eſtabliſhment, and its revolutions. This knowledge will teach you the value of, and enable you to prize that liberty, which your anceſtors purchaſed with their blood. It will be a mean of infuſing the ſpirit of genuine patriotiſm into your own breaſts, and will incite you, by joining in repreſentation and remonſtrance with others of the ſame claſs, to endeavour, to the utmoſt of your power, to oppoſe all injurious innovations in that conſtitution, which you have been juſtly accuſtomed to revere. Opinions and inſtructions, founded on your knowledge of this conſtitution, and whoſe object is the general good of your country, delivered with firmneſs and deciſion to your repreſentatives in parliament, will ſtamp your characters with real worth, will ſecure the eſteem of thoſe repreſentatives, and, what you ought to regard as ſtill more material, will enſure to you the merited gratitude and reſpect of your fellow ſubjects, who will conſider you as the watchful guardians of their rights and privileges.

To an intimate knowledge of the Britiſh conſtitution, which I conſider as an eſſential qualification in a Britiſh Freeholder, there ſhould undoubtedly be added, a general acquaintance with hiſtory both ancient and

modern, and a particular acquaintance with the hiſtory of our own country, which will be found to be a moſt important and neceſſary accompliſhment, equally conducive to your amuſement and inſtruction. I will add, as none of their leaſt conſiderable advantages, that while ſuch ſtudies tend to improve your minds, they will contribute to check that ſpirit of exceſſive gaming and diſſipation, and that immoderate paſſion for convivial entertainments, which have irretrievably ruined the health and fortunes of many individuals among you. Thus much with regard to the improvement of your minds.

Once more, Gentlemen, and I ſhall have done with this addreſs.

Allow me to conclude, therefore, with exhorting you to extend your charity and beneficence to the poor, and to grant your tenants that indulgence and ſupport, which their ſituation, in conſequence of the late unfavourable ſeaſons, loudly calls for at your hands.

You were never placed, Gentlemen, in a more important ſituation, than you occupy at preſent- You never had it in your power to do ſo much good, or to prevent ſo much evil, as at this critical juncture. Can there be any occaſion to remind you, that the ſpirit of emigration very ſtrongly prevails through

a great part of North Britain? Many of yourſelves have already felt the effects of that emigration. And to what degree this ſpirit may extend, it is impoſſible, I apprehend, to determine. You, Gentlemen, and you only, can effectually ſuppreſs this ſpirit; not by procuring the enactment of penal laws, in order to reſtrain it, a mode of procedure inconſiſtent with the rights of Britiſh ſubjects, but by relieving the diſtreſſes of the poor, by giving work, and wages to the induſtrious, and by granting ſupport and encouragement to your tenants. If ſuch plans as theſe are not adopted, the northern part of this iſland, already conſiderably depopulated, may, in time, become almoſt a deſert.

With regard to the relief of the poor, and the giving bread to the induſtrious, I truſt that the dictates of humanity, aided by thoſe of chriſtianity, will ſuggeſt your duty, and excite you to the performance of it. There has not been a time, in the memory of man, when your exertions were more needed, than they were in the late diſtreſsful times; and you may be aſſured, that, reduced as the inferior claſſes of the ſtate then were to great poverty, by the general ſcarcity, of which they yet feel the effects, thoſe exertions muſt be ſtill wanted, in order to render their ſituation more comfortable. Let not, therefore,

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the cries of the poor aſſail your ears in vain!

Upon the laſt point, the granting ſupport and indulgence to your tenants, I may reaſonably hope to be heard with attention; for when I plead their cauſe, I addreſs myſelf to your good ſenſe, to your humanity, and to your ſelf-intereſt, at once. If, gentlemen, you do not conſider your tenants as your flock, that you are entitled to fleece, to worry, and to devour at pleaſure, you will perceive the reaſonableneſs of granting them, in ſuch times as theſe, both indulgence and ſupport. If you do conſider them as your flock, beware of deſtroying them, leſt you find your own ruin involved in theirs

Allow me to remind you, gentlemen, that the order and harmony of ſociety, depend upon the co-operation of its ſeveral parts in the production of the general happineſs. If one of the members of the political body ſuffer, the others muſt ſuffer along with it, juſt as in the natural body. You cannot proſper, gentlemen, while your tenants are depreſſed. Many of you, indeed, are placed, by the providence of God, in opulent circumſtances in life; but to what are you indebted for that opulence, but to the induſtry of thoſe tenants, whom ſome of you ſuperciliouſly deſpiſe, and others inhumanly oppreſs? Remember, that the duties of *patronage*

and

and *fidelity* are reciprocal; and, that if your tenants owe you *rent*, for the farms they poſſeſs, you owe them *protection and encouragement*, upon account of the punctual payment of thoſe *rents*. In the mean time, you cannot be ignorant, gentlemen, for many of you have felt it to your coſt, that the crop of 1782 failed prodigiouſly, through Scotland, and that the crop of 1783 was a very ſcanty one.—But have you, upon this occaſion, acted like wiſe and faithful ſhepherds, who are watchful over their flocks, and attentive to their paſture? Have not many of you, rather, like wolves, worried thoſe flocks which you ought to have protected and fed? I am ſorry to obſerve, that this rapacity was too general, among land-owners, in this part of the kingdom, a rapacity which, they muſt excuſe me for the obſervation, indicated as little diſcernment as humanity, in thoſe who were guilty of it. Was this a time to profit, by the high price of grain, at the expence of your tenants? How, gentlemen, could you be ſo hard-hearted, as to demand from them, what Providence, by blaſting the crop, had ſeen meet to deny? Was not thi- acting the part which the Egyptian taſk-maſters, of old, acted towards the Iſraelites, when they required them to make bricks without ſtraw? In fact, you had no title, in reaſon or equity, to the

full

full payments of your rents, in ſuch a ſeaſon, as that to which I refer, when your tenants, in general, were ſcarce able to pay the half. The conſequences of your ſeverity, have already too plainly appeared. Many of your farms lie waſte, and the country begins to be depopulated; and the diſtreſſed, impoveriſhed tenants fly to America, in hopes of obtaining there, that encouragement which is denied them in their native country; or at any rate, in hopes of meeting with gentler uſage, and with kinder maſters.

I take a pleaſure however in obſerving, (to their honour be it mentioned) that a conſiderable number of proprietors of land whom I have heard of, have acted a very different part from the majority of this claſs, by remitting to their tenants, ſome of them a great part, others of them above the one half, of their uſual rent; and by a humanity and prudence, very different from the oppreſſive ſpirit and ſhort-ſighted policy of their neighbours, have, at the expence of a ſmall temporary loſs, preſerved their lands in tillage, and ſaved their tenants from ruin. If you, gentlemen, who have acted otherwiſe, have a proper regard to your own intereſt, (for I addreſs you at preſent upon ſelfiſh principles) you will imitate the example of thoſe land-owners I have juſt now mentioned, and

whom

whom I beg leave to point out to you, as the objects of your imitation. The circumſtances of your tenants in general ought to prompt you to the diſcharge of your duty in the preſent caſe, and incline you to give them all that indulgence and encouragement which their ſituation calls for. If, in ſuch critical times as the preſent, you refuſe them this I may venture to adopt the words of the prophet, and aſſure you, that *your own iniquities will correct you* and that *your backſlidings will reprove you.* You will ſoon feel the conſequences of your oppreſſion, by ſeeing more of your lands lie uncultivated; and what is worſt of all, your country ſtill farther depopulated.

THE END.